BY-PRODUCTS OF THE RURAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

J. M. SOMERNDIKE

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OF THE RURAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

BY

J. M. SOMERNDIKE

Author of

"ON THE FIRING LINE WITH THE SUNDAY SCHOOL MISSIONARY"

Philadelphia
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1914

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I
UNMEASURED VALUES 3

CHAPTER II
THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF THE RURAL SUNDAY SCHOOL 21

CHAPTER III
COMMUNITIES REDEEMED 43

CHAPTER IV
HOW CHURCHES ARE DEVELOPED 63

CHAPTER V
TRAINING WORKERS FOR THE KINGDOM 83

CHAPTER VI
RECRUITS FOR THE MINISTRY AND MISSIONARY SERVICE 99

CHAPTER VII
SOCIAL EFFECTS OF RURAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL WORK 115

CHAPTER VIII
WAYSIDE EVANGELISM 133

CHAPTER IX
SUNDAY-SCHOOL EXTENSION 151

21487

INTRODUCTION

INCREASING attention is being given to the Sunday school. This is due to the recognition that it has become the most important agency in the religious instruction of our youth. We do not refer to the Sunday school apart from the Church, but to the Church working through the Sunday school.

We are beginning to realize that in America both the Church and the nation must depend largely upon the Sunday school for the Christian instruction of our boys and girls, as well as for the Bible study of our adults. Earnest efforts are being made to render our Sunday schools more efficient, so that better and more abundant results may be obtained from the work done in them. Consideration, however, has thus far been given for the most part to the larger schools in our towns and cities.

It is well for us, therefore, to have our attention directed to the smaller rural schools. The majority of our Sunday schools are of this character. In many cases these schools are taking the place of churches in scattered communities. A church could not be supported, but a Sunday school can be carried on by the people themselves, and may become the center of the religious life of the neighborhood.

The opportunities for Bible study and the development of Christian character in these schools are in many ways superior to those in the larger city schools. Few of us realize how vital and far-reaching is the influence emanating from these little schools. Many of our leading pastors, prominent

church workers, missionaries, and teachers received their first spiritual impressions in Sunday schools of this nature.

Mr. Somerndike, in his book, "By-Products of the Rural Sunday School," has made a valuable contribution to our knowledge and appreciation of Sunday-school work in general, and particularly as carried on in the little country school.

No one who is interested in work of this character can fail to read this book with pleasure and a growing recognition of the important results that are being achieved. We hope that it may come into the hands of many who are living in these rural communities, that they may be encouraged to undertake such work for their neighborhoods.

We should be glad to have the attention of Christian men and women, living in towns from which nearby rural communities can be reached, directed to a method of work that yields such abundant, satisfactory and enduring results.

We feel sure that, as this book is read by large-hearted men and women interested in the religious welfare of their own land, and seeking opportunities for profitable investment of the means the Lord has intrusted to them, they will feel more than ever inclined liberally to support the Church in carrying on this vitally important service that is accomplishing so much directly and indirectly for the salvation of souls, the building up of Christian character, and the progress of Christ's kingdom.

ALEXANDER HENRY.

UNMEASURED VALUES

1. The school that changed the name of "Hell-for-Sartin."
2. The Sunday school that caused the countryside to turn out and build nine miles of good roads.
3. A homesteader who is superintendent of two Sunday schools and assists four others.

CHAPTER I

Unmeasured Values

The direct results of Sunday-school missions may readily be tabulated. Since the aim of this work is to place the opportunity for Christian instruction within the reach of the children and youth of America, by establishing and maintaining Sunday schools in localities where they are lacking, it is a matter of simple arithmetic to arrive at the figures showing the number of Sunday schools organized, the number of persons enrolled in them, the number of pastorless families visited, the Sunday-school conferences and institutes conducted, and such other totals as would be necessary to show the volume of work accomplished by the field force of one hundred and twenty-five Sunday-school missionaries.

The direct output or product of Sunday-school missions is found in the Sunday schools organized and revived; the persons who have been enlisted in Christian service as Sunday-school officers and teachers; the improvements effected in the ideals and methods of the Sunday schools in a given district; the boys and girls gathered for Christian instruction; the character that is being shaped by the faithful work of self-denying Sunday-school teachers; and the transformations wrought in the life of those who have found Christ and who have been made whole by his gracious touch. But in performing

these labors there are bypaths that must be traversed; and the Sunday-school missionary finds himself touching and influencing the life of the people on his field in many other helpful ways. Indeed, it is frequently the case that the forms of service from which he derives the greatest encouragement and inspiration may be those which would be regarded as secondary to the ultimate goal he has in view. Again, we should remember that the full value of the mission Sunday school cannot be determined merely by what it is doing for the neighborhood in which it is situated, but that its influence reaches as far as its members may be scattered as they pursue their life work. The teaching in a rural Sunday school on the prairie frequently has been known to bear fruit in missionary service in distant lands.

The direct product shown by statistical reports is not the only measure of efficiency in missionary work such as this. The value of the by-product is worthy of equal consideration. In commercial enterprises, the by-product is frequently of greater value than the principal article manufactured. Certain commodities are made not so much for the profit which they will bring to the manufacturer, as for the sake of the secondary product which is of greater worth and which cannot be obtained without the process required in order to produce the output that appears to occupy the place of chief importance.

The immediate product of Sunday-school missions is seen in the hundreds of little Sunday schools that are springing up, many of them in obscure rural

neighborhoods back from the main lines of travel in which a multitude of boys and girls are being taught the principles of morality and religion, and directed toward the surrender of their lives to their Saviour and Lord, consecrating themselves to his service. Thus the Sunday-school missionary may proudly point to a dozen, or, sometimes, to as many as fifty mission Sunday schools within the boundaries of his field, which can be depended upon to meet regularly for the study of the Word and in which faithful work is being done. This, he will tell you, is the result of his missionary labors, because it is his business not only to organize schools but to keep them alive and in good working condition as far as it may be within his power. But for what purpose are these Sunday schools established? Do they not exist primarily for the molding of Christian character, and is not Christian character the foundation of all that is good and virtuous and uplifting in any community? The by-products of character-building are innumerable. The wise and careful investor would not consider the possession of property in a neighborhood that was notoriously vicious, a safe asset; neither would such a place be likely to be selected as a desirable community in which to live and rear one's family. But the existence of a Sunday school or a church in a community always stands as an assurance of its stability, even though some forms of evil may be knowr to flourish there. The presence of the Sunday school in hundreds of neighborhoods of doubtful reputation has

been the means of effecting changes in conditions of life and environment, that could not be traced to any other source than the influence of the Christian character of those who had been brought into contact with higher motives and impulses through the Sunday school's work. "Hell-in-the-Woods," a little village along one of the mountain streams in Tennessee, became Helenwood after the Sunday-school missionary had established and nurtured a little Sunday school there. It was composed at first of rough mountain boys and girls, and when the missionary began his work those who were opposed to the Sunday school would shoot out the lights. It was only by tactful, persevering work that a school was started. But they responded to the quickening touch of Christian teaching, many of them finding salvation with newness of life and purpose in Jesus Christ. Thus, from the little Sunday school an influence is radiated so far-reaching in its effect as to be immeasurable. Such is the value of the Sunday-school by-product.

Such work cannot always be computed in figures. We cannot measure the extent of an influence for good which may be started through the planting of a little Sunday school in some sin-darkened neighborhood, nor can we record the direct results of a chance meeting, a wayside visit, or an encouraging word. This is a service in which personal work looms up in large proportions; and the Sunday-school missionary soon learns the importance of seizing every chance meeting or conversation as an

opportunity of witnessing for Christ. The Sunday-school missionary, driving along the road on a visit to a new neighborhood, stops at a wayside home for a friendly greeting, and to talk about the Sunday school. The husband is at work on the farm, but, as it is about the noon hour, the missionary, who is always a welcome visitor, is invited to join the family in the midday meal. Years have passed since their home has been visited by a Christian minister. After he asks the blessing upon the humble repast, the mother exclaims, "My husband used to do that, but he gave it up long ago." Then the missionary hears the story of their hardship and struggle, how the discouragements and the absence of any Christian influence in the neighborhood have caused them to become indifferent to the inner voice which at first reminded them of their religious duties, but which had grown dumb because of their heedlessness and neglect. The old trunk is opened and the relics of former days exhibited to the missionary's view. Among them are some devotional books, and, still more surprising, a local preacher's license which had been granted to the husband years before. Then the rest of the story is told; how easily they had fallen into the godless ways of their neighbors, sacrificing all to the lust for possessions. The missionary yields to the entreaty to remain with them for the night, feeling that in the face of such a providential opportunity he cannot resume his journey without rebuilding the family altar in that home and bringing them back to God. After the chores have been done, the

husband and wife are seated about the fire with the missionary, and as they talk over their experiences, confessing their backsliding, they face the great need. The missionary leads them to the throne of grace and there this preacher-farmer again finds his voice in prayer and pledges renewed allegiance to his Lord. He promises the missionary that he will conduct and keep alive the little Sunday school that has been started in the community, and that he will faithfully hold up the standard of righteousness before that people.

Thus, a work of grace has been started which may directly influence not only the lives of scores of persons, but which eventually may transform the life of the entire neighborhood. It was just a wayside call, and the Sunday-school missionary could have found many reasons for passing on, but, following the example of the Good Shepherd, he could not be satisfied until he had brought these wandering sheep back into the fold. He went to this neighborhood to organize a Sunday school, and that is the product he reports; but who can estimate the value of the by-product of souls reclaimed and a community redeemed? Only the Book of Life can contain a record of the results of such labors.

It is not unusual for neighborhoods in a newly settled district, into which the forces of evil so often find their way with the first newcomer, to be completely dominated by the degrading influence of the weekly dance, the gambling den and the saloon. The establishment of the Sunday school in such a

community at once causes a line to be drawn clearly and distinctly between those who are interested in the development of religious life among the people and those who are indifferent or opposed. The Sunday-school forces, though feeble at first, find themselves engaged in a conflict with these agencies of destruction, and in hundreds of instances the saloon eventually has been obliged to close its doors and the dance hall has been converted into a place of Christian worship.

A Sunday-school missionary in northern Wisconsin recently had the experience of seeing two saloons closed and the third almost completely abandoned, Sunday baseball discontinued and the town "cleaned up" through the persistent labors of a few faithful men and women who have been conducting the Sunday school which he established. When he first visited this locality on a Sunday afternoon, he found a ball game in progress, and the saloons wide open. When he spoke to them about having a Sunday school they declared that such an institution had never been known in the place. In canvassing the homes, the missionary found only a few who were willing to lend their assistance, but as the school grew, the interest of the entire neighborhood began to be aroused because the good influence of the little school was being seen on every hand. Some of the money that the saloon keeper formerly received has been diverted into better channels, for without any outside aid they have built a commodious chapel. The missionary says

that this little school is known all over the county for the good work it has performed.

As the Sunday school develops, the community begins to have social interests that are more profitable than the weekly dance. The craving for human fellowship which brought the people from their lonely, isolated homes "to meet folks" at the dance hall, can now be satisfied by the Sunday-school service which old and young attend. The good literature which the Sunday school brings into the homes awakens higher ideals and stirs the youth with the visions of higher and better things than his neighborhood with its meager advantages and inferior associations, is capable of providing. He begins to see the value of an education, ambitions and aspirations are awakened, and he longs for a chance to take his place in the great world about which he reads.

Again the Sunday school brings a new interest into the home life as the Bible becomes the daily portion of the family, as they learn the Sunday-school songs and read the Sunday-school library books.

As the school develops new features, with its Cradle Roll for the babies, its Home Department for the "stay-at-homes," and its parents' or Adult Bible classes, it becomes the center of community interest. In one locality the whole countryside turned out with shovel and scraper to build a better road several miles in length leading to the little chapel which had been erected to house their

Sunday school. It had wrought a mighty work in the community, and they had learned to appreciate its value.

Thus the Sunday school becomes more than a religious force. Its influence permeates the whole social organization. It is the saving salt of hundreds of neighborhoods, in the sense that it is the preserver of that which contributes toward the sustaining of spiritual life, at the same time arresting the inroads of moral decay. The Sunday school frequently stands alone, representing the only religious work in the township and sometimes in an entire county. It bears up the whole task of religious education. Its membership is not limited to children of church members nor does it require the acceptance of the tenets of any particular denomination. Not only does it make its influence felt as a social force, but the entire locality may come together under its banner to teach and to study the Word. From the school a church may develop, in the course of time, whose denominational affiliation will be determined by the will of the majority; but in many places the community cannot support a church and there the Sunday school stands in the place of the church, feeding the spiritual life of the people, developing character among the youth, and ministering in many helpful ways to their moral uplift. The organized church, however, should be considered one of the most important of the by-products of Sunday-school missions. The rural Sunday schools have been the foundation of at least

eighty per cent of the new churches placed upon our roll in missionary synods during the past twenty-seven years.

Not only does the Sunday school exert its influence in the immediate locality in which it is situated, but it becomes the training school for Christian workers in our city churches. In scores of instances it has been found that the most faithful officers and members of city churches formed the great decision which led them into Christian life and activity in some little Sunday school in an obscure neighborhood. It is well known that the trend of life is toward the city. It is the custom of Dr. John Timothy Stone, of the great Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, to give a Christmas dinner to the men of his congregation who are boarding in the city and who cannot get home to the country districts to spend Christmas with their families. On one of these occasions he found that twenty-seven states were represented. If inquiry were made, doubtless it would be found that many of these men received most of their religious training in little Sunday schools in the country districts. It is by no means an idle speculation to say that in providing for the religious instruction of the country boys and girls by planting mission Sunday schools, within their reach, we are contributing in a substantial degree toward civic betterment. The pastor of a large city church of national prominence, in addressing a conference of Sunday-school mis-

sionaries, said: "You are purifying the stream that flows into the cities. We are receiving into our city churches young men and women who received their first impulse toward the Christian life in the rural Sunday schools which you have planted."

Again, the rural Sunday school has furnished a considerable percentage of ministers, missionaries and teachers. The far-reaching effect of the product of the little Sunday school from this viewpoint alone cannot be measured or even estimated. One little Sunday school, which for years has been the only religious influence in a country neighborhood, has produced forty-three ministers.

Many of the boys and girls in our rural Sunday schools are going to the Presbyterian colleges for their education, and here again the influence of the faithful work of consecrated Sunday-school teachers in the back-country districts, is seen in the character of those who compose the student body in such institutions. They contribute in a large measure to the Christian atmosphere of the college, taking an active part in the religious activities, some becoming candidates for the gospel ministry and others preparing themselves for other forms of service for the advancement of the kingdom.

The little Sunday school which has but a temporary existence must be considered, also, in such a survey as this. Those who are familiar with conditions in frontier districts, the future of which is often speculative, are never heard to say that the efforts of missionaries in localities which do not

promise the organization of permanent churches, are lost. If we were to measure our work for Christ and our fellow men by any such standard the religious needs of hundreds of neighborhoods that now enjoy the blessings of the church and Sunday school would have been ignored by the missionary for years, and a multitude of souls eternally lost. If missionary money expended in the unpromising places is wasted, then what is the use of sending missionaries into the lumber camps or into the mining districts of the United States or Alaska, to follow the gold stampedes, where cities may spring up in a night with no assurance of permanence? They may last a year or five years; who can tell? But shall they be neglected because of such uncertainty? Some of the most encouraging experiences in missionary endeavor have come from work started under the most trying circumstances. The Sunday-school missionary especially, can point to some of the best results of his ministry as the outgrowth of a feeble work which lived but a short time and has long since disappeared.

A Sunday school was established in a new lumber town in northern Wisconsin several years ago. It represented the only religious influence in that neighborhood; and through its work many of the boys and girls were led to confess Christ. The vast forest has been removed; the lumber men have moved on; the town is deserted; and the little Sunday school has been discontinued. But the good influence goes on and bears fruit elsewhere. The

Sunday-school missionary was surprised one day to receive a letter from a sixteen-year-old girl who had given her heart to Christ in this "backwoods" school, informing him that she had started a Sunday school in the new village to which her family had gone; and as no one would take charge of it, she was acting as its superintendent. She added that recently five of her pupils had become Christians. Similar testimony could be given concerning scores of other places. In fact, the whole history of missions at home and abroad furnishes many illustrations of the indirect results of time and energy expended in cases where from a human standpoint they seem to have been lost.

Our faith is weak indeed, if we hold back because we cannot see the end from the beginning. If the opportunity to minister to the needy and to save souls does not outweigh the credit of reporting permanent organizations effected, then we have departed far from the viewpoint of the Master when he gave the "Great Commission" to his disciples. It was the need that they were to consider and endeavor to supply. They were to sow the seed, resting upon his promises for the results. Spiritual values cannot be appraised by material standards, and they do not always make good statistics. An editorial from a well-known religious weekly accurately describes the situation as it is found in certain sections of the West, peopled by homesteaders, in the following:

"In a state as well churched as Kansas even, there is one whole county—Grant—which has no church organization. Haskell County has only two ministers; Morton County only one. In Washington there is a valley six miles wide and sixty miles long already well filled with settlers, and of them all not one-fifth are to-day within any reasonable reach of Christian worship—to say nothing of Christian pastoral services in their homes. These are but samples of a condition quite common through the West—regions of wide extent wholly neglected in home-mission enterprise, while there is an absolute scramble of rivalry to keep a footing in other places that would be better off with less attention. Of course, the neglected districts are those less promising of growth and wealth—less likely to develop 'self-supporting churches.' But on that very account the struggling settlers need the comfort of religious ministrations all the more. All the home-mission agencies of the nation, in fact, ought to have an infusion of more courage to undertake work never expected to 'come to self-support.' The great construction camps along irrigation and railroad projects, for instance, are temporary communities soon to disappear, but they ought to have religious opportunities while they last. Many a mining camp, even though permanent, is passed by because there aren't enough Christian people in it to make a church organization."

While it probably would be difficult to provide churches or preachers for such places, it is possible to maintain Sunday schools and thus keep alive a religious influence until the time shall arrive when a church develops and the way is prepared for the settled pastor. But let us remember that even the temporary, short-lived Sunday school has possibilities which cannot adequately be determined, and its by-products can be known only by the wise Providence who controls men and circumstances, assuring us that "no chance with Him is lost."

Thus we find adequate ground upon which to base our consideration of the value of the by-products of Sunday-school missions. By concrete instances we shall proceed to discover how the little Sunday school is ministering effectively to the spiritual and social necessities of thousands of families whose religious welfare would otherwise be neglected, and how its influence reaches out, touching life at every point, helping to solve some of our most troublesome social and economic problems, and how it is contributing in large measure toward the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of our Lord.

THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF THE RURAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

1. A Sunday school which meets in a railroad station.
2. Temporary building which housed a rural Sunday school in the northwest when almost the entire neighborhood opposed the work.
3. This Sunday school closed the "pool-hall" and the weekly dance.
4. This chapel and Sunday school are the result or a beginning made with a few children in a Tennessee mountain hamlet.

CHAPTER II

THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF THE RURAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

At a Children's Day celebration in a little rural district in Wisconsin, a tableau showing the change which the Sunday school had wrought was arranged, without aid or suggestion of the Sunday-school missionary, as an object lesson to the people. The first scene showed the condition of the community before the Sunday school was organized. Young men and women were seated about tables playing cards and drinking; others were dancing and still others showed evidences of intoxication. The second scene presented a picture of an ideal home. The parents and children were seated about the family table, reading the Bible and the Sunday-school library books, and studying the Sunday-school quarterlies. The public drinking house and the dance hall had disappeared, homes had been restored, and families reunited. The same picture would illustrate the change that has been experienced in many places where the Sunday school has stood as the only influence for righteousness. Wherever the little Sunday school has been planted it has taken a firm position as the enemy of the saloon and of every other evil that preys upon the youth. The Sunday school aims to construct Christian

character. The saloon and the dance hall, which so frequently go hand in hand, depend upon securing new victims from among our boys and girls —the same boys and girls whom the Sunday school aims to reach. This brings them into direct conflict, and those who are interested in the little Sunday school soon find that they must take a decided stand. Some of the finest examples of Christian heroism have been found among the superintendents and teachers in rural Sunday schools who have fought bravely and successfully against the evil conditions which surround them.

The Sunday school teaches abstinence from the standpoint of the Scriptures. Intemperance is held before the pupils as a sin not only against oneself, but against God, and the warrant for such teaching is found in his Word. "Take away the Bible from us, and our warfare against intemperance and impurity and oppression and infidelity and crime is at an end. We have no authority to speak, no courage to act," said William Lloyd Garrison.

The influence of Bible instruction as it is given in the little Sunday school has awakened many a neighborhood to see the moral ruin for which the saloon is responsible and the moral wreckage which it has strewed in their midst. It has stirred them to action. It has made the saloon question vital in the community and has called upon everyone to declare himself for or against it. One of the strongest factors in the progress of the anti-saloon campaign all over our land has been the little rural Sunday

schools, situated in localities where the issue has been closely drawn, and no quarter given. One or the other must go, but usually it has been the saloon, with all the other evils that it encourages.

It is invariably the case, where churches and Sunday schools are lacking, that the forces of evil are doubly active in taking advantage of the situation. The Sunday-school missionary in such places finds that he must meet these foes. He has something far more serious than indifference with which to contend. Here the saloon and the pool room become the favorite meeting place for the men and boys; and the Saturday night dance is the social center of the neighborhood. To attend their orgies the people come from a distance of many miles, and with a plentiful supply of liquor, they hold high carnival until the dawn of the Lord's Day. "Pray for Pine Ridge," pleads a Sunday-school missionary. "They have put up one of the bravest fights against great odds that I have ever witnessed. Instead of staying with them one day as I had planned, I spent five days encouraging them in every way I could. In this community there is a Saturday night-Sunday morning dance which demoralizes the whole country round about. They dance from nine o'clock on Saturday night until five, and sometimes until seven, o'clock on Sunday morning. A great deal of liquor is consumed; and the stories of evil that I have heard in connection with these performances make me heartsick. Evil reigns supreme. They even have a 'relief band' whose object is to

relieve anyone in the neighborhood who may be experiencing temporary prosperity. The school board in the adjoining district west of this community was obliged to take the doors, windows and stove out of their new schoolhouse during the vacation season, and store them away for safe keeping." The Sunday-school missionary was tempted to abandon the work, but as he said, "It looked so much like saying to the devil, 'It is too hard for God, so you may have it,'" so he determined to help them fight it through. As the time came for him to leave the community the few who were interested in religious things came to him saying: "Now, don't give us up, and quit coming, even though it is discouraging. We wouldn't be so bad if we could keep this Sunday school going. Won't you help us all you can?" The latest reports indicate that this school is growing. They were encouraged by being able to have services every Sunday throughout the winter, in spite of zero weather.

A little Sunday school in the sand hills of western Nebraska succeeded in driving out the dance hall in a unique manner. After the Sunday school had been organized, the missionary arranged a series of evangelistic services with the hope of arousing deeper interest among the people. While the meetings were in progress in the schoolhouse, a dance hall was being erected about a quarter of a mile distant. Nothing was said against the dance hall, but as the interest in the Sunday school developed the dance hall began to fall into disrepute. Then

the people wanted a church. Some of the men of the community who had subscribed for stock in the dance-hall enterprise came and offered to donate their holdings to the church; others found it injurious to their reputation to be known as dance-hall stockholders, for the sentiment of the entire community had undergone a change, and they sold out. Finally, those who were interested in the church found that they owned a majority interest in the dance hall, so they decided to convert it to better use. The building was plastered and painted, seats and pulpit secured, and thus it became the church home for the little congregation, dedicated and set apart to the worship of God. The entire community rejoiced in the transformation that had been wrought.

In nearly every community, no matter how godless, it is possible to find some one who longs for better things and who nourishes the hope that some day the missionary will come their way and establish gospel privileges among them. Possibly it is a mother whose boys have fallen victims to their evil surroundings and who looks upon the coming of the missionary as an answer to her prayers. "We have never had a Sunday school here," writes a woman from a remote Wyoming settlement. "Our neighborhood is twenty-eight miles from the nearest town, but there are at least fifty families within a radius of ten miles who should be interested in religious work. Some of these people have not been to church for seventeen years. I, myself, have

not heard a sermon for seven years, as it is twenty-eight miles to the nearest church, but when a dance is given at a ranch house the people come from twenty-five to thirty miles and farther. Frequently they have from one hundred and fifty to two hundred people in attendance. I have long wanted a Sunday school but no one is willing to lead the movement." It is the Sunday-school missionary who must organize the work and find leaders to carry it forward. In such places it takes considerable courage for anyone to come forward as a leader in a movement which will antagonize the existing forms of evil and questionable amusements of which the people do not want to be deprived. But after the Sunday school has had an opportunity to demonstrate its value to the neighborhood, many of those who at first were indifferent or opposed to it, have become its supporters.

In a country neighborhood in northwestern Missouri, where a Sunday-school missionary had been at work, some evangelistic meetings were held. During these services a number of young people professed conversion, among them being a young man who had been the organizer and leader of the neighborhood weekly dance, besides enjoying the distinction of being the champion pool player for miles around. The dances have been discontinued and this young man has centered all his interests in the Sunday school. With his own hands he made a pulpit for the little chapel, and he is present with his children at every session of the Sunday school.

The dance hall and the saloon go hand in hand. Where the one flourishes the other thrives, and the Sunday school, especially in new communities, thus finds its evil foes doubly fortified against any reforms which it may hope to effect. A little cross-roads Sunday school was started about twelve miles from the nearest town in a needy section of Minnesota. The community could not support a church, and the Sunday-school missionary was the only pastor they knew. A little distance down the road were two saloons, both doing a good business. Side by side these agents of Satan and of Christ worked for three years, each striving to overcome the influence of the other. But the little Sunday school won the fight, and now the boys and girls are being trained for Christian living instead of for the saloon, since both saloons were obliged to close their doors. Another little Sunday school in Minnesota had a prize fighter for its first superintendent. The people felt that in a community so irreligious, force rather than religion would be needed in maintaining the Sunday school. Later the prize fighter became a new creature in Christ and this neighborhood lost its reputation for godlessness—another by-product of the rural school.

In the far West among the ranchmen, the Sunday-school missionary sees everywhere the degrading effect of liquor traffic. Here he meets fine specimens of young manhood, who, finding themselves far removed from the restraints of the more thickly settled parts, with no recreation or amusements, and

no one to uphold high ideals, soon fall into loose habits and become victims of drink. An Idaho Sunday-school missionary had an interesting experience in a ranch community, which illustrates in a very striking manner the power of the Sunday school and the by-product through which its influence will go on in ever-increasing service for the kingdom. Let the missionary tell the story:

"Some time ago I visited a new frontier village, in a cattle country, where thousands of cattle roamed over the plains, and through which a railroad had just been built. Being informed of the godless character of the place, and the need of gospel work in the community, I dropped in and found three saloons and two general stores, a blacksmith shop, a small drug store, and a few other stores doing business in tents. There were several families, some living in small houses, others in tents. The saloons were well patronized day and night by the cowboys from the surrounding cattle ranches. The town had been 'shot up' on several occasions by drunken cowboys. A small building had just been erected for school and church purposes; there were two or three Christian families in the community that were hoping for the time to come when they could have Sunday school and occasional preaching service. We held a few meetings and organized a Sunday school. Early one morning a business man, who conducted one of the stores, went to the depot to inquire about some goods he was expecting. As he turned to go back to his

place of business he saw two young men dressed in cowboy attire sitting on the depot steps. He stepped up to them and inquired if they would be in town overnight. Both were under the influence of liquor, having spent the night in the saloons. The larger of the two replied that they came in yesterday from the cattle ranch, that they spent all night in the saloons, and that they might go back to-day and might not for two or three days.

"'Well, boys,' said he, 'if you are in town to-night come up to the little chapel yonder. We are having gospel services there every night, the first we have ever had, boys, in this part of the country; and everybody is coming.'

"'What,' said the cowboy, 'preaching? I didn't think there was a preacher within a hundred miles of here. No,' he continued, 'we couldn't go to preaching, we are too rough.'

"'Now, boys,' said the business man, 'I am in earnest in this matter; I want you to come. Where will you be this evening at 7:30?'

"'If in town, likely in the saloon,' said the cowboy.

"That evening before service the business man went to the saloon and found the young men.

"'Now, boys,' said he, 'I have come after you, and I want you to come with me to the service.'

"They tried to excuse themselves by saying that they had nothing but the cowboy clothing that they had on, and couldn't go in that condition.

"'Never mind your clothes,' said the business man. 'Throw off your cartridge belts and put your guns behind the bar, and come as you are; you will be welcome.'

"I shall never forget that evening when that man came into the little chapel with the two cowboys, taking a seat by their side on one of the wooden benches in the rear of the room.

"The service had not yet commenced, and as I looked into the face of the larger of the two, although the marks of dissipation were plainly visible, beneath were the lines of character; and I said to myself, 'There is a diamond in the rough, and by the grace of God we must get it out.'

"As I preached that night I prayed. The cowboy was restless at first; but soon after I began my address he turned his eyes upon me and never took them off until I was through. At the close of my address I saw that he was deeply interested and greatly agitated, and when I gave the invitation to stand to all who would forsake their evil way and confess the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour from sin, a number arose. Among the first to stand was this cowboy. He came out from his seat and up the aisle to the platform and, with tears streaming down his cheeks, he put out his hand to me saying, 'Parson, will you let me say a word?'

"He turned to the audience and began to speak. He hadn't spoken but a minute until it was evident that he was an educated young man; his grammar was perfect. He told of his boyhood home and his

past life; he was the only child of well-to-do parents in old New England. His parents had given him a fine education. He graduated with high honors from one of our largest Eastern colleges. His parents wanted him to enter the ministry. 'But,' said he, 'I was never converted; my heart turned away from the ministry, and soon after my graduation I ran away from home and came out to this Western country, and for years I have ridden the range, and gone to the depths of sin. For five years I have not written my mother, and she doesn't know but what her boy is dead.'

"When he mentioned the name 'mother,' he broke down and cried, 'My God, have I killed my poor mother?'

"I have witnessed many touching scenes in my twenty-eight years of pioneer mission life in this Western country, but seldom have I witnessed a more touching scene than this. There wasn't a dry eye in that audience, and the Holy Spirit's power was wonderfully manifest. The cowboy fell upon his knees in front of the platform, pleading with God for mercy, and asking forgiveness.

"That business man, God bless him, came and knelt by his side; others came and gathered around that group, and before he arose from his knees the pardon of God came to him; and as he arose he threw his arms around his friend exclaiming, 'God bless you, sir, for bringing me here to-night.'

"The business man said to him, 'Come home with me to-night; I want you to spend the night with me.'

"'Thank you, sir,' said the cowboy, 'but no sleep for me until I know if mother is alive. If mother is dead, sir, I never can forgive myself. I have killed her. God has forgiven me, sir, but I can never forgive myself if mother is dead.'

"He went to the little station, and this message flashed over the wire to the old New England home: 'Your long lost boy is found and saved. Answer quickly. Charley.'

"He walked the floor of the little station that night for the return message. About ten o'clock the next morning it came, and the first words of the message were these: 'Thank God, our boy still lives. Come home at once. Father, Mother.'

"The young man leaped for joy, praising God that his life had been spared to his dear mother, and that she would see her boy saved and in his right mind. The next evening he came to the service nicely dressed. That dissipated look was gone, and the love of God shone in his countenance. He brought with him to the service two young men, former companions whom he had helped to drag down in sin.

"In the after service that evening, he gave a testimony of wonderful power, and getting his two companions on their knees in prayer he never let them rise until he led them to Christ. The third day he took the train for the old New England home to bring cheer and comfort to the dear parents who had mourned their only child as lost.

"He remained at home some time, entering with all his heart and soul into Christian work, and later, carrying out the desire of his parents, he began to prepare for the ministry. Already he has been the instrument under God of leading many souls to Christ."

That godless frontier village is to-day a prosperous town of more than two thousand population; a peace-loving and God-fearing people. That little Sunday school has grown to a strong, self-supporting church, sending out its beneficent rays of blessing throughout all that region of country. This is the result of a little Sunday school in a rural settlement.

In a little town in a northwestern state where a comfortable little Presbyterian church stands to-day as the direct outgrowth of the work of a little Sunday school, we have a splendid illustration of the triumph of the Sunday school over the saloon. When the Sunday school was organized, there were fifteen saloons and a population of about three hundred. The outlook was most discouraging. The whole neighborhood was completely under the control of the liquor men. When the missionary visited the people for the first time they advised him not to attempt any work among them. One storekeeper took him aside and said, "I would dislike very much to see you leave town discouraged, so in my judgment the best thing for you to do is to leave town before you undertake to do anything." The missionary said he would stay and fight it out. "If you

feel that way about it," he said, "you can depend on me, and I will do all I can to help you."

True to his promise, the missionary began to look about for a place of meeting. He finally secured the use of a room, and then started out to invite every one to attend the service. After doing all this he felt that one thing more must be done to stir the people. So he took his stand on the street corner between two saloons and sang a gospel song. Then as the men gathered about him, he invited them to attend the meeting. The attendance was not large but sufficiently encouraging to go on, so he advertised services to continue every night for the remainder of the week. The interest increased and on Sunday the first Sunday school in that entire district was organized. Men who had been notorious characters were present at that service and expressed their determination to lead better lives and to support the good work. A physician who had lost his reputation and practice through drunkenness became a new creature in Christ. He was among the first to urge the organization of a church in addition to the Sunday school. Later he was elected as chairman of the building committee. He superintended the building of that church, and when not engaged in his practice, which he had largely recovered, he could be found with hammer and saw, hard at work on the building, trying to honor Him who had saved him from a life of sin. But what happened to the saloons? A few weeks ago they held an election to vote on "no license,"

and the saloon interests were completely overwhelmed.

In missionary work among the mountaineers of the South, the Sunday-school missionary finds that the greatest hindrance to his work is the saloon and the "blind tiger." Probably nine-tenths of the crimes committed in that region can be traced directly to strong drink, but even there where drinking is so prevalent, the Sunday school in many instances has succeeded in restraining it to a large degree, and in some cases in removing it completely. In a mountain village along one of the creeks in east Tennessee a distillery and saloon had been doing a thriving business for fifteen years or more. Under the "four-mile law" this saloon was compelled to close. Our Sunday-school missionary, seeing in this circumstance the opportunity for which he had long been waiting, immediately canvassed the entire community and made his enterprise doubly sure by renting the saloon building for the first session of the Sunday school which he intended to organize. The people responded heartily and the school grew very encouragingly. After the school had been carried on for some time the Sunday-school missionary held evangelistic services, as a result of which fifty persons confessed Christ, most of them uniting with the Presbyterian church three miles distant. The need of having their own building became more pressing week by week. The people were very poor, but after all had subscribed they found that more than fifty dollars had been raised.

The Sunday-school missionary undertook the task of helping them erect a chapel, and in a few days succeeded in securing a donation of a piece of ground in a central location. It was impossible to raise enough money to buy new lumber, so the missionary opened negotiations with the owner of the saloon, purchased it for seventy-five dollars and moved it down to the ground that had been donated. With the help of a few friends, they reconstructed it, placing a small steeple on the front, and there it stands to-day as a Presbyterian church. As soon as it was completed, special services were held and twenty-nine more persons confessed Christ. This little mountain village has shown evidences of complete transformation. It is a redeemed community, families that were estranged for years have been reunited and the children are being trained in the fear of God.

A little town of about three hundred people had been in existence for twenty-three years without churches or Sunday schools. Ministers of all denominations had passed it by as hopeless. Its reputation for lawlessness was known everywhere. Illicit distilleries did a thriving business and shooting affrays were frequent. The Sunday-school missionary was warned not to attempt any work there, but, true to his duty, he felt that the children, at least, should have some opportunity to rise above their evil surroundings. A Sunday school was organized without any encouragement from the community. The missionary cared for it, visiting it as often as

possible and gradually its influence began to be felt. The people became more interested, as they discovered what a firm hold the Sunday-school teaching had taken upon their children. Gambling was stopped by common consent. The illicit distilleries found their business declining and soon they were obliged to move out. The necessity for a chapel building became very pressing, and in response to the missionary's appeal eleven hundred dollars was contributed to erect a comfortable house of worship. The church was organized and regular preaching was maintained. Even the traveling men who visit this town remark concerning the change that has taken place since the Sunday school came in and caused the liquor interests to move out. Doubtless this neighborhood would have gone on for years in its degraded condition, but for the little Sunday school. A church could never have been started without its preparatory work. This is a fine illustration of the expulsive power of the Sunday school. A veteran missionary who has planted hundreds of Sunday schools in destitute neighborhoods, said recently, "In many a western settlement I have seen the little Sunday school drive out the saloon, the pool hall, the weekly dance and the gambling den."

These illustrations show what the rural Sunday school can do in a neighborhood where the forces of evil have been in possession. In hundreds of cases where similar conditions have prevailed, the uplifting influence of gospel teaching in the lit-

tle Sunday school has gradually made itself felt throughout the entire community. Nowhere do we see the parable of the leaven so forcefully illustrated as in missionary work of this kind. Again we are reminded of the words of the Psalmist, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." How often the rural Sunday school has been as a light shining in darkness, but growing brighter and brighter until its glow is diffused in every corner, dispelling darkness, radiating warmth and bringing new life to thousands who have been dead in sin and indifference! Does it not revive our faith and strengthen our purpose in Christian work when we see how effectively God uses even the humblest effort put forth in his name to overcome evil? Some one has wisely said that the secret of all social reform is to "empty by filling." We are told that nature abhors a vacuum. "We cannot pump darkness out of a room; we must empty it by filling it with light. One tallow dip will do more to exclude darkness than a thousand steam pumps. The only way to shut out disease is to fill the veins with health. In morals we must banish the degrading by the elevating." We must crowd out the saloon, the dance hall and kindred evils that are undermining the characters of our boys and girls, especially in neighborhoods where there is no restraining influence, by introducing the Sunday school with its Bible lessons, its wholesome literature and its exalted ideals.

A pastor making an earnest appeal for Sunday-school missionaries to labor in a needy district of

the northwest, states that there are "four hundred neighborhoods without churches or Sunday schools." The writer adds: "In ten to twenty years, if the gospel is not given these places, a generation of children will grow up knowing very little of Christianity, of Christian life, but a great deal of vice which seems to take root in this virgin soil, as do the noxious weeds and brambles in a neglected field. Saloons, roadhouses and dance halls are planted everywhere long in advance of the coming of the missionary. What will you do with these four hundred villages and hamlets?"

This work is fundamental to the success of many other forms of service. Through Sunday-school missions we not only bring the boys and girls into contact with regenerating influences, but we are indirectly aiding the cause of temperance and promoting a higher social morality. These by-products of the rural Sunday school are placed first because they are the first steps toward a redeemed community. Let us look farther and see how the Sunday school changes home life, and how neighborhoods have been transformed by its renovating work.

COMMUNITIES REDEEMED

1. An oil camp made over by the Sunday school.
2. The school that transformed a degraded negro neighborhood.
3. Some pupils in a rural Sunday school, thirty miles from the nearest church.
4. This home furnishes four devoted Sunday-school workers who walk eleven miles to the schoolhouse every Sunday.

CHAPTER III

COMMUNITIES REDEEMED

Along the banks of the Little Kanawha, which winds its way in and out among the foothills of the Blue Ridge, a primitive people had been left to dwell unmolested for generations, with no knowledge or vision of the great world beyond the towering hills. But the silence of centuries has been broken by the invasion of a great industry. Here the geologist has laid bare hidden treasures, which mean untold wealth to the capitalist. All over those steep hillsides they are boring deep into nature's treasure house; and, dotted here and there, the pumps and derricks may be seen, bringing the oil to the surface, where it is sent forth by pipe line to the world's market.

One day the news came that "a gusher" had been opened some fifty miles up the river. The rush began, and a town sprang up, as it were, in a night. The rougher element were in possession. There was no Sabbath, for every day was alike. There was neither church nor Sunday school to counteract the wide-openness of this town in the midst of a new and promising oil field. Two young fellows offered the prosecuting attorney twenty-five hundred dollars if he would prevent an indictment for six months, that they might sell whisky. Conditions

were degrading in the extreme. But, as in Sodom, there were a few faithful people who had succeeded in resisting the temptations with which they were surrounded. Among these were several good women whose help could be depended upon, and at the suggestion of the Sunday-school missionary they gathered together a company of little children in one of the homes to make arrangements for a Sunday school. Under great discouragement, and fear of opposition, they decided to make the attempt to maintain a Sunday school; and that decision marked the beginning of a new era for the whole district. At first they labored against great odds, but soon their example and their faith began to impress even those who were opposing the work. There was a noticeable difference, too, in the character and behavior of the children. Thus the Sunday school gradually came to be looked upon as a real benefit to the community. They found that it was teaching the children things that made a difference in their home life. Ambitions were awakened, the Sunday-school literature was taken into the homes and was eagerly read by the parents as well as by the children. Soon an adult class was formed in the Sunday school, and thus the interest developed to such an extent that the people refused to be satisfied with a Sunday school only, but clamored for preaching services besides. A pastor was secured, and the little organization began to be the center around which the interest of the entire community was encircled. To-day a comfortable chapel stands on the

hilltop as a monument to the work of the little Sunday school which, in the beginning, stood bravely and alone, as the representative of a higher standard of life and conduct, against almost an entire neighborhood that had yielded itself to the forces of evil. It tells the story, too, of hundreds of communities whose redemption may be traced to the coming of the Sunday school into their midst.

On the western plains, in districts where people are living long distances apart, and where no one has ever had the courage to try to start a church, the Sunday school represents the only gospel influence that the people are privileged to have. They are too poor and too scattered to support churches that would warrant preachers in locating there. A Sunday-school missionary who has planted a number of rural Sunday schools in such districts, tried the plan of holding Sunday-school conventions for the benefit of those who are the workers in the little schools which he has started, and for any others who were interested. In describing one of these conventions which was held in a schoolhouse, far out on the prairie, a missionary tells us that at the afternoon session the little room was packed, about one hundred and twenty-five people being present. The missionary was surprised to see such a large gathering in a region that seemed to be so sparsely settled. "Where did all these people come from?" he inquired. He was told that many of them had driven distances of from fourteen to twenty miles, and some had come thirty miles. Thus do they ap-

preciate such opportunities, and they are deeply interested in what the Sunday school is doing for them and for their children. The Sunday school has been the means of setting up the family altar in many a sod shack and one would be surprised to find such spiritual fellowship as may be experienced among these people. These Sunday-school officers and teachers carry the whole community upon their hearts. This incident is related not because it is isolated and striking, but because it fairly illustrates what the rural Sunday school means in such places, and what a large place it occupies in the life of the people scattered over these western prairies, where there is not a church within reach and only occasionally is a minister seen. To see the wholesome effect of the little country Sunday school upon these prairie settlements, gives one a deeper conception of the invaluable service which it renders to the citizenship of this nation. What does the Sunday-school missionary say about it?

"Away down in the southwest, along the Cimarron River, I walked over the sand hills, through the sagebrush and soap weed, where there are miles between the scattered homes. People are living in dugouts, half dugouts and shacks, holding down their claims—some of the finest people I have known. We organized a Sunday school, a wee bit of a school with two classes. It has come up through hard struggles, but is winning out and getting on its feet. It is the whole religious life of the community. What would they do without it! There are

many just like it." This is the testimony of a man who has seen homes and entire neighborhoods brought to the feet of Jesus through the work of the little Sunday school.

Sometimes the coming of a Christian man or woman into a neighborhood gives a new start to the Sunday school and enables it to minister in an effective way to the life of the people. A little town in Iowa had been in a state of religious stagnation for nearly thirty years, with no apparent hope of improvement. This neighborhood had an unsavory reputation. It had earned its bad name by the drunkenness and crime that had become so common in it as to be of almost daily occurrence. Before the Sunday-school missionary found this place an effort had been made to conduct a little Sunday school, but it had not made any impression upon the life of the people. The missionary saw the opportunity, and knowing what the Sunday school had accomplished in other places, started out to discover some one who would take hold of this feeble Sunday school, revive it and make it a neighborhood affair. He succeeded in enlisting the interest of a physician and his wife, both of whom were Christians, and who had but recently moved there. They have a Sunday school to-day with a membership of more than one hundred, and a Presbyterian church with an attendance of from seventy-five to one hundred. It is the usual thing to find that one-half of the attendance is composed of men and boys. Intemperance, Sunday baseball, hunting and horse-

racing, as well as low dances, have been compelled to give way before the splendid work of this little Sunday school. The life of the entire village has been reconstructed. Even the highways have been improved. Through the encouragement given by this consecrated physician and his wife, a course of free lectures and entertainments is conducted during the winter. Church services are held in the Odd Fellows' building, in a room formerly used for a saloon. The doctor is helping them, not only with his medical knowledge, but with his wise advice and excellent judgment, to build up the work upon a permanent basis. No call goes unheeded if he feels that by responding to it he may be able to awaken the young people, and adults as well, to see their opportunities and to take advantage of them. The day is not far distant when the community will demand a house of worship in place of the present room, where, under the faded paint on the front door, one reads, "No minors allowed."

Again the rural Sunday school discovers people who, years before, in their former homes, had been Christians, church members, and sometimes active church workers. There are thousands of people living in rural parts of America, who, upon moving into new neighborhods, have not had sufficient strength and grace to take a stand for Christ in their new environment, and have fallen into the easy, careless ways of those about them, concealing the fact of their former church connection. It has frequently occurred that the visit of the Sunday-

school missionary and the planting of a little Sunday school have brought back to such people the teachings of the early days. They have been led to come out on the side of truth and to exert their influence upon the neighborhood in the direction of higher and nobler ideals. A Sunday-school missionary in Idaho recently had an interesting experience of this kind. He was prospecting the Medicine Lodge country near the Montana border, which he was told had never been visited by a Christian minister or missionary. He tells the story of the reclaiming of a backslider and the redemption of a community. "After leaving the railroad and driving by team more than thirty miles over desert plains, through valley and cañon, I found people living all along the valley, some having been there for twenty-five years. One Sunday morning we had service in the little schoolhouse, the first gospel service in all that region of country. About twenty persons were present, more than half of them children. A well-to-do ranchman, one of the oldest settlers of the valley, in whose home I stayed overnight, attended the service with his family. He had given no indication that he had ever been a church member, but before I was through with my address I saw that he was interested. At the close of the service I went to his home to get my grip. He followed me in, went to an old trunk and took out a copy of a worn, leather-bound Bible, opened it and took from between its leaves a church letter and handed it to me. It was his letter of dismission from his old

church in Scotland, recommending him to the church in America. It was dated 1880 and signed by the pastor of the church. I could speak but a few words to him as he turned away to conceal his emotions. For thirty-three years he had wandered and drifted from the teaching and profession of his boyhood years. As I started to drive away he took me warmly by the hand saying, 'Come again.' We organized a little Sunday school there at the close of that service, and the superintendent writes me that this man is teaching the adult class, and is an excellent Bible student." He is a leader in the neighborhood; and since he has shown an active interest in the Sunday school the morals of the whole region have shown a decided change for the better. The by-product of redeemed neighborhoods is one that is of incalculable worth.

A Sunday-school missionary in the Middle West, in canvassing a portion of his field, discovered several neighborhoods, situated in a rich agricultural district where the people were prosperous but godless. Anti-religious societies flourished among them, and they boasted that no minister could do anything in their midst. In fact they had driven out every minister who had attempted even to hold services. One man said, "We have about as much use for a minister as we have for smallpox." The Sunday-school missionary was not easily discouraged and in a tactful way set to work to win them through the children. After visiting among them for two or three weeks and succeeding in winning some to

the support of his plans, he organized a little Sunday school. It grew from the very beginning, and is becoming more and more a power for good among them. The infidel societies are weakened and almost ready to disband. The sentiment of the neighborhood has completely changed. The social and moral chaos into which the people were plunging themselves and their children has given place to quiet, well-ordered homes and to ideals of civic betterment that will make this neighborhood not only a safe place in which to live, but a blessing to hundreds of lives.

Probably one of the most encouraging illustrations of the social transformations that have been effected through the instrumentality of the rural Sunday school is seen in work among the southern negroes. One of our efficient Sunday-school missionaries who has carefully studied the problem in a southern state and who has applied himself intelligently and energetically toward its solution makes this statement:

"The negro Sunday-school missionary is not only confronted with problems similar to those of other fields, but with these plus others that are characteristic of the negro alone. The word 'destitute,' as applied to the regions in the West, means a community without Sunday schools, without a church, without God. But among the negroes it often means a community with plenty of churches of different creeds, but without Sunday schools; church members with no conception of the real, Christlike reli-

gion, but who think that they are as good as it is necessary for them to be. While these churches in such communities are numerous, the pastors, as you can imagine, are inferior men. Anyone who sees that he can have it comparatively easy by being called to preach, 'hears the call,' takes charge of the church and becomes the leader of the community, which will rise no higher than he. Often they are bad men at heart, very ungodly in conduct and totally ignorant. These are the fields the missionaries find the most fruitful, but certainly the hardest. They have the largest number of criminals, the largest number of lynchings, the largest number of immoral homes, the largest number of premature deaths. The census of one hundred and twenty-five men on the chain gang was taken, and only five had ever been to Sunday school. In another community, out of ninety such men only three could read and write. In that same community a Sunday school was organized with fifty-three members, but only two could read fairly well. In this community are eight churches. The missionary was not cordially received in one of these communities, but with tact and prayer he gained the confidence of the people. They will read his literature, if they can, and listen to his message." Two of these communities in Georgia have been completely revolutionized in the last three years. In one, the missionary had to be guarded; in another he had to get the consent of the white plantation owner before he could go on the premises.

In another case the conversion of a negro boy whom the Sunday-school missionary met on the road to the schoolhouse, was the means of beginning a work which resulted in the transformation of an entire neighborhood. He in turn brought his companions to the Sunday school. Special meetings were held, and during their progress this young negro boy found Christ. Then he brought friend after friend to Jesus. His zeal for righteousness and his childlike faith have been the means of working a complete transformation in that village. The missionary reports that upon his last visit he found to his amazement that all the boys and girls in that locality had become members of the little Sunday school and were faithful in attendance. The father of this boy was converted, family prayers are now held regularly; the cabin is kept clean and neat, and others have been stimulated to do likewise.

In the mountain hamlets of the southern Appalachians we may find many instances of transformed homes and lives, the study of the Bible in the Sunday school resulting in an elevating of the entire social organization. One superintendent of a new school came for five or six weeks in his shirt sleeves, overalls, and with bare feet; the secretary, a woman of about forty, came with bare feet. But soon the superintendent had on new shirt, new trousers and shoes, and the secretary had a new hat and a pair of shoes. The Sunday school incites to better things in every direction. One old man said, "I'm mighty

glad you come, you done a heap for my old woman (she was converted), and you've raised the price of land."

One of the most encouraging features of the work of the little Sunday school, especially in the mountains of the South, is the change which it is the means of producing in the home life of the people. The little cabins are cleaned, curtains appear at the windows; the children dress better and habits of personal cleanliness are developed.

A Sunday-school missionary in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee recently discovered a neighborhood where there were about one hundred and fifty people living in a very destitute condition. They were fifteen miles from the nearest town. They had neither church, Sunday school nor day school. The nearest district school was situated on the opposite side of a high mountain which was four miles across. Their isolation was complete. No one had ever attempted to provide for their spiritual or educational necessities, and the entire neighborhood had fallen into careless ways. The missionary canvassed the situation thoroughly and, although no one seemed to be very enthusiastic about having a Sunday school, he felt sure that the need warranted some expenditure of time and effort upon his part. Then he was encouraged by the village blacksmith who said, "just you come over to Shackletown, and have a meeting with us. We hain't got no church nor nary schoolhouse, but I'll clean out the blacksmith shop and we can meet

there." The missionary accepted the offer and told the blacksmith to advertise the meeting. On the following Sunday the missionary found that the blacksmith had been true to his word, and the house was filled with men, women and children. The hastily improvised seats were not sufficient to accommodate all who attended, and many of them stood through the service. Afterwards, when the missionary asked them to vote on the question of having a Sunday school, they were unanimous in their desire for it, electing the blacksmith as their superintendent. The problem of a building was difficult, but under the missionary's leadership they secured a small plot of ground, hauled the lumber and erected a plain boxed house with a little steeple over the doorway. This building serves their needs for church, Sunday school and day school. Preaching services are held once a month and the Sunday school is growing steadily. How did this school show its effect upon the neighborhood? First of all, the people became dissatisfied with the name of their village. They had changed, the reputation which the neighborhood had earned in former days applied to them no longer, so they came together and voted to change its name to Philadelphia. This was not the only change. The missionary tells us that since the Sunday school has been at work here, dilapidated log cabins have been repaired and made more attractive inside and out. Fences have been rebuilt and the entire locality has assumed an appearance of thrift and cleanliness which it never

before possessed. This community may never be any larger than it is to-day; it may never be able to support a church; but the influence of the little Sunday school planted in its midst has changed the entire aspect of that district.

The Sunday school in its study of the Bible brings to these people the supreme incentive which they need, an ideal of life, creating within their hearts the impulse toward it. It restores the sanctity of the Sabbath, it stimulates the private study of the Scriptures, and they strive to apply the truths of the Word to their own lives. A little mountain town in eastern Kentucky which was notorious for its illicit distilleries, its feuds and frequent shooting affrays, was visited by a Sunday-school missionary. He found it without any religious influence, but, realizing the possibilities of establishing a Sunday school in their midst, he and his devoted wife took up headquarters there and began to hold Sunday school in their little home. The interest grew, and it soon became necessary to hold the meetings of the Bible class on week nights. Meetings for prayer and Bible study were held as frequently as practicable, and it was not long before a number of the young people came forward, seeking to make a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ. They soon had a nucleus for the organization of a Presbyterian church; a chapel was erected, educational facilities improved, and regular church services held. The Bible class by this time had grown until it had an average attendance of forty-five, and, during

the six years of the missionary's residence there, it continued its enthusiastic interest in the study of the Word. A flourishing young people's society was maintained, and through its work the youth of the entire community were reached with good reading matter; social meetings were held and, before long, the life of the entire community centered about the little chapel on the hillside. Most remarkable, however, was the fact that of the sixty members of the little church, everyone but three could take part in the meetings by leading in prayer. The family altar was kindled in nearly every home. What effect did all this have upon the community life? Feuds of long standing were healed up, and whereas the town had been noted for its lawlessness, it now gained a reputation for quietness and decency in public and private life. At a public meeting held in this church, a county judge arose to testify to the change which had been wrought through the introduction of Bible study into that region. He said that before the coming of the Sunday school, his court had been busy with trials for murder and nearly every other crime on the calendar, most of the culprits coming from that very neighborhood, but since the Sunday school had been doing its work among them, he had almost nothing to do in the way of meting out punishment. He characterized the change as miraculous and gave the credit to the interest in religious things which had been developed among that people.

This is not by any means an isolated case. Scores of mountain communities have undergone a similar

change through the work of the little Sunday school. In a mountain hamlet in West Virginia where there is a flourishing church with an average attendance of more than one hundred, and a still larger Sunday school, of which the church is the outgrowth, a remarkable work of grace has been accomplished. When Christian work was begun here, every religious service would be broken up by a neighborhood fight. For generations a family feud had been in progress and had terrorized the whole region. The missionaries even carried bandages with them to every meeting, because they were sure to need them in caring for the wounded. To-day it would be difficult to find a more orderly neighborhood. It was a long time before the feudists would give in, but gradually their enmity toward one another cooled, and the leader of one of the fighting families became an elder in the church. During some revival meetings, the leader of the opposing family, his wife and several of their children, professed conversion. The communion Sabbath came and this family expressed the desire to be received as members of the church. It was a day of rejoicing and blessing to the whole neighborhood. When this big mountaineer stepped forward and accepted the right hand of his former enemy, in Christian fellowship, the congregation was moved to tears. In the presence of God and his people, a covenant of peace was sealed between the contending families as they gathered about the Lord's table. All the trials of the former days in endeavoring to keep the Sunday

school alive in that neighborhood, against fearful odds, faded into insignificance in the joy that they experienced in witnessing the transformation that had taken place.

Numerous illustrations could be given to show the effect of the little Sunday school upon godless neighborhoods, wherever our Sunday-school missionaries have been at work. But, after all, the Sunday school is merely the human agency through which the work has been done. It is the power of the Word, the transforming grace of Jesus Christ and the work of his Spirit, that has brought about the redemption of these distorted souls and reconstructed these sin-cursed neighborhoods. The gospel is tested by its influence upon the lives of the people to whom it is proclaimed, by the changed social conditions which result from faithfully teaching it. If our faith in the regenerating power of the Word has been weakened by the multitude of new ideas and theories that have been advanced during these latter days for the betterment of social conditions by scientific or psychological methods alone, we may find refreshment in studying the effect of the gospel, taught in all its simplicity, in the mission Sunday schools where thousands are being directed Christward, and neighborhoods remade.

Nowhere may we witness more encouraging evidences of the social effects of the teaching of the Word than in Sunday-school missions. There are hundreds of places where similar work could be done if the men and means were available. It is

the Sunday school that has been the entering wedge for the gospel in places where the church would have been excluded. Shall we not put forth redoubled efforts to give to every unreached community the opportunity of Bible study by sending Sunday-school missionaries to establish Sunday schools in their midst?

HOW CHURCHES ARE DEVELOPED

1. The home of a rancher who gave $2500 toward the building of a church.
2. The outgrowth of a Sunday school in a frontier neighborhood.
3. A Sunday school that changed the life of a negro community.
4. A Presbyterian church which grew from a frontier Sunday school in a ranch settlement.

CHAPTER IV

HOW CHURCHES ARE DEVELOPED

Twenty-three hundred churches in twenty-six years! This is one remarkable by-product of the work of Presbyterian Sunday-school missionaries. Sixteen hundred and fifty of these churches are affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Since the beginning of this work, each year has shown an average of eighty-five churches established as a development of rural Sunday schools. The outposts planted by the Sunday-school missionaries at strategic points are thus becoming permanent centers of Christian influence. Localities which in many cases had been neglected for years by the missionary pastor as being hopeless from a spiritual standpoint, are now being blessed, and are blessing others, through the pioneer work of the mission Sunday school. The minister of a leading Presbyterian church on the Pacific Coast recently stated that nearly ninety-five per cent of the new work opened in his synod during the past decade is due to the energy and labor of the Presbyterian Sunday-school missionaries. There are only three or four of the Presbyterian churches which have been organized in that district during the past ten years, which have not grown directly or indirectly from this work.

It has been conservatively estimated that at least eighty per cent of the new Presbyterian churches organized in missionary districts in the United States during the past quarter of a century have been the direct outgrowth of the rural Sunday school. Attention has been called to the large return that has accrued to the Presbyterian Church in property acquired through the organization of these churches. An approximate calculation shows that the value of church buildings erected by these congregations exceeds one and a half millions of dollars. This represents about seventy-five per cent. of the total cost of Sunday-school missionary work during the years it has been in operation.

It should be clearly understood, however, that the aim and purpose of the Sunday-school missionary is not to organize churches. Although he and the Board which sends him forth, rejoice in the fact that the seed they have sown in the organization of rural Sunday schools comes to such an abundant fruitage, it must be considered a by-product. The Sunday-school missionary enters a neighborhood for the purpose of gathering the children and young people together for Christian instruction, with much the same motive as that which impelled Robert Raikes, more than a century ago, to establish his "ragged schools." In many neighborhoods he finds the children in a condition of spiritual destitution similar to that of the children of old Gloucester in those early days. He has in view the formation of Christian citizenship, the building of

character in the lives of those whom sin has not yet claimed.

The whole story of Sunday-school missions is a splendid illustration of the leading of a little child. Beginning with the repeating of the little prayer that has been taught in the Sunday-school, the child of the godless home is taking the first step toward leading its parents to God. The Christian literature which the child brings from the Sunday school and in which he finds so much that interests him, attracts the father and mother; frequently they are importuned as only a child can importune them, to read the stories aloud. In this way hundreds of hearts have been touched. As the parents become interested they demand preaching services. The Sunday-school missionary cannot localize himself by agreeing to conduct church services regularly; he therefore reports the circumstances to the proper committee of the presbytery, whose business it is to provide pastors for rural congregations, to advise with reference to plans of church organization and the building of a house of worship.

In tracing the development of churches and the erection of houses of worship as the outgrowth of rural Sunday schools, we may find some very interesting and inspiring illustrations of consecration and service. In a little Colorado settlement situated out on the plains in the eastern section of the state, the Sunday-school missionary planted a Sunday school. The neighborhood was without any religious opportunities when the missionary dis-

covered it, but new people were moving in and with their coming new agencies for evil were finding a foothold. It was with some misgiving that the missionary left the neighborhood after opening this school, fearing that the little light which had been kindled might not survive even a brief absence upon his part. He succeeded, however, in interesting a young ranch-owner and his wife and they promised to do their utmost to keep the school alive. Assisted by occasional visits from the missionary, they succeeded, and the light began to burn brighter, sending its purifying rays into the homes of many who had wandered far from God. The missionary was not slow to seize the opportunity for developing a permanent preaching point here, and he made arrangements for periodical services. From that time the work continued to grow until a Presbyterian church was organized and a church building erected. The young ranchman whose example had done so much for the neighborhood was the first elder of the little church. Although he lives in a little house worth not more than five hundred dollars, he contributed twenty-five hundred dollars toward the erection of this church building. This organization ministers to a large section of country, being the only church of any denomination for a distance of many miles, and it has become the center of the life and interest of scores of families.

During the past fifteen years this Colorado Sunday-school missionary has established one

hundred and sixty-one new Sunday schools among the homesteaders of the plains, and in the mining camps of the Rockies. In the majority of cases he was the first representative of any evangelical denomination to visit these neighborhoods. Twenty-eight Presbyterian churches, with their own chapel buildings, erected at a cost of sixty thousand dollars, bear effective witness to the wise planting and nurturing care of this faithful missionary. But with all this he has not yet covered his entire field. He writes of districts in which no work has yet been attempted by the representatives of any denomination. The development of the work at N—— is typical of the manner in which many of our frontier Sunday schools have prepared the way for permanent churches. This town is located thirty miles north of Greeley, Colorado, on the Union Pacific Railroad. When the missionary first visited this locality he could find no public building in which to hold a service. Permission was obtained, however, to hold a meeting in a new livery stable, and here a Sunday school was organized. Later the Sunday school moved into a tent which had been provided by the Sunday-school missionary and within a short time the people petitioned the presbytery to organize a church. Twenty-five persons were received as charter members. In about a year after the Sunday school began its work a building was completed at a cost of fifteen hundred dollars. This church is doing an excellent work in the community.

It would take volumes to tell the story of all the churches that have developed from rural Sunday schools. Some have come into existence through trying experiences, frequently discouraged and ready to die, but the Sunday-school missionary came to their rescue and succeeded in reviving them. One of these missionaries who is now doing faithful work in a needy field in one of the Pacific Coast states was surprised recently to receive a newspaper clipping from a neighborhood in Montana in which he formerly had labored, containing the notice of a public election to decide upon the organization of a Presbyterian or Congregational church. This Sunday-school missionary had been the only minister these people had known during the years he labored in that region. He looked upon the community as one that probably would never be able to support a church; indeed it was difficult even to maintain a Sunday school. The influence of his work not only remained with them after he had left that field, but it grew among them, and the little Sunday school flourished. A town meeting was called and a committee was appointed to conduct an election, all agreeing to be governed by the will of the majority. When the vote was counted, it was found that the greater number desired a Presbyterian church. It is encouraging to the Sunday-school missionary to know that his work among them in former years has borne fruit in this way, and that the influence of his labors was the chief factor in causing them to affiliate with the Presbyterian denomination.

Report of Committee on Church Election

The church election held at the Earlingburt Hall, Jan. 7th, resulted as follows:

Total votes cast, 115.

In favor of Presbyterian church, 69.

In favor of Congregational church, 46.

Majority in favor of Presbyterian church, 23.

C. C. AYERS, M. H. HELDMAN,
MARTIN E. ROCKWELL, Com.

We may go a step farther and see an entire presbytery erected as the outgrowth of rural Sunday schools. In 1902, the Presbyterian Church of Miles City was the only church of that denomination between Bozeman and Dakota, in the Helena Presbytery, a distance of four hundred and three miles by rail. For several years there has been a rapid increase in population, owing to new railroad building. Many new towns have sprung up; Sunday schools have been organized in many of them, some of which have grown into Presbyterian churches under the nurturing care of the Sunday-school missionaries. This development of the pioneer work, together with the enormous expense of travel due to long distances and the imperative need for more local activities to foster future growth, made it necessary to divide the Helena Presbytery by forming another called Yellowstone Presbytery, with six ministers and nine churches.

It has been said that it is impossible to determine the far-reaching extent of a religious influence introduced into a community with the coming of the mission Sunday school. The organization of a church is only the beginning of still greater by-products which continue to appear as the years come and go. An illustration of this is seen in the case of a Sunday school organized in the C—— G—— district. A few months afterwards, when meetings were held in the missionary tent, there was a genuine revival and a unanimous desire for the organization of a Presbyterian church, which soon fol-

lowed. A commodious house of worship was erected, the people of the community paying the entire expense. Among those who united with the church were Mr. and Mrs. B——. The former was elected a trustee. Soon after his election to that office he went to a meeting of the presbytery; and not being aware that only elders or ministers were allowed to become members of that body, he took part in all the proceedings, a right he thought he possessed because he was a trustee. His wife at the same time was enjoying the women's missionary meeting. In the morning a pastor saw him at the hotel and was surprised to hear him say that it was his purpose to spend the night there. He was constrained to return to the home to which he and his wife had been assigned while presbytery was in session. After the meeting of presbytery had adjourned Mrs. B—— told the minister why her husband wanted to stay at the hotel. He was afraid that his host would ask him to say grace at the breakfast table. His fears were not without foundation; for as they sat at the table the next morning, his host turned to him and said, "Mr. B——, please express our thanks." Speaking about this afterwards to a friend he said, "I thought of my little church and did not want to disgrace it, so I asked the blessing." And he added, "When I went home I did the same thing and also established the family altar."

Not long after this a movement was inaugurated to raise funds to endow the chair for Bible study in

a western college. This good man was asked to make a contribution and some ten days later he went to the office of the president and gave his check for one thousand dollars. At one time there were seven young people from this church and Sunday school attending Presbyterian colleges.

A Sunday-school missionary in Colorado was invited to preach the anniversary sermon in a church that had grown from one of his little Sunday schools, and to break ground for the building of a manse. The event was one of unusual interest, because it demonstrated in an impressive manner one of the by-products which a little Sunday school is capable of developing.

When he first visited this field it was a churchless and godless community and when the Sunday school was first organized, both workers and attendants were few. Among the few attending was a boy from an irreligious home. The father professed to be an infidel, and the mother, though reared under Roman Catholic influences, had begun to share the spirit of her husband and had become indifferent to religious things. About three months after the Sunday school had been organized, the lad, who had been a regular attendant, was taken ill. His illness soon became serious, and the parents, in alarm, summoned the nearest physician, who lived ten miles away. After diagnosing the case, the physician gave the parents no encouragement to hope for the patient's recovery. Without being so informed by the doctor, the boy himself came to realize the hope-

lessness of his condition. Calling his mother close to him he said, "Mother, I will not be with you long; I know I will die soon. I am glad the Sunday school was started before I got sick, and that I had the chance to attend it. Down there they told me of Jesus, and that he died on the cross to save people from their sins. They say he loves everybody—even boys—and that for those he loves and who love him, he is preparing mansions in the sky. I believe it, mother, and when I die I believe I will see Jesus, and believe that he will take me to his home in heaven. But before I die there is one thing I want to ask you to do. Will you do it?"

Through her tears the mother replied, "Yes, son, whatever you ask of me I will do if I can."

"Promise me that, after I am gone, you will attend the Sunday school," he pleaded.

The mother gave her promise.

To the father, a little later, the boy practically repeated what he had said to his mother, and exacted from him also a promise to attend the Sunday school.

After the body of the boy had been laid away, the parents, not yet because of any interest on their part in the study of the Bible, but remembering the promise to their boy, began to attend the Sunday school. It was not long before both were converted.

When this incident became known throughout the community others began to repent of their indifference toward God and the Sunday school. Hearts were softened and opened to the reception of the

gospel. Revival meetings were held and several people were converted. The organization of the church followed, and about the same time a building was erected. Since that time steady progress has marked the work. The minister of this church is himself a trophy of the work on this field. This was the first Sunday school he ever attended. It was here he came to a saving knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and here he heard the call to devote his life to the gospel ministry. His wife also is a token of the blessing of the Lord upon the work of the rural Sunday school. The first religious influence that came into her life was through the Sunday school and there, she too, found her Saviour.

Not all the churches developing from our rural Sunday-school work are Presbyterian. When a mission Sunday school is planted, the Sunday-school missionary does not demand that it be designated a Presbyterian school. He is interested primarily in having the people study the Bible and teach its truths to their children; so many of our new rural schools are called "Bible" schools. By this method all can unite in helping to carry on the work of the school, regardless of their denominational preferences. If the work developes into a permanent church organization, even though it bear the name of another denomination, we may rejoice in the fact that the Sunday school has so influenced the neighborhood that such a result has been possible.

It is usually found that the school that is the most difficult to maintain is that which is located in the most needy place. The lack of leaders, the indifference of the people and the discouragement of the surroundings make it all the more important that the children, at least, should be brought into touch with something better than their environment affords, so the Sunday-school missionary gives such localities a liberal share of his attention. People are always attracted to the man who refuses to recognize defeat, and eventually his enthusiasm and persistence not only win friends to himself, but helpers to the cause he represents. This is why the Sunday-school missionary wins where others have failed. Some of the most inspiring victories have been achieved in the face of conditions that would have quenched the enthusiasm of one who was not controlled by the spirit of unselfishness and faithful perseverance. They tell a story in a little town in southwestern Kansas about the way in which the Sunday-school missionary, who knew their need better than they, literally compelled them to have the Sunday school. He has gone from that field, but his name is honored throughout that whole region because it was through his determination to save them from the consequences of their own indifference that the marvelous things which they have done were made possible. This is what they said about it:

"Wood came down here to Mulberry and organized a little Sunday school, but it didn't last long.

We couldn't keep up a Sunday school here at Mulberry. But Wood came again, pulled us together and reorganized the Sunday school. The second Sunday school died as had the first, and then we were sure we couldn't have a Sunday school at Mulberry. But Wood kept coming. We don't know how many times he organized that little Sunday school during the years he stuck by us. Finally we did come to have a regular Sunday school in the little schoolhouse."

Soon afterwards Mr. Wood succeeded in having the nearest Presbyterian minister go to Mulberry, a sixteen-mile drive each way, to hold occasional preaching services. This opened the way for organizing a church, and they voted unanimously to make it Presbyterian. Later this young minister, to whom they had become greatly attached, was called to go to China as a foreign missionary. Before leaving them he urged them to build a house of worship. Under his leadership this was done. Besides raising money for the church, they united with the two other country churches that were under this pastor's care, and contributed four thousand dollars to build a hospital in the locality to which he was going in China. One of the young women of Mulberry went to China with him as his life partner. What a change had taken place! A neighborhood that could not support even a Sunday school, now has a flourishing Sunday school and a working church with a missionary representative in a foreign land, all growing out of the perseverance

of the missionary who kept the Sunday school going at a time when no one cared. "If it hadn't been for the way Wood stuck by us during the trying times of those early years, we never would have had anything here at Mulberry." It will be seen from these illustrations that the rural Sunday school is a most effective entering wedge for the church in places where church organization is a possibility.

The Freedmen's Board renders helpful service in its special field by following the work of the negro Sunday-school missionaries. A few years ago a negro Sunday-school missionary was working in Burke County, Georgia, where appalling destitution prevailed. After traveling for several hours afoot through a district untouched by the railroad, he stopped at a large plantation. He visited the cabin homes by the way, talking about the Sunday school, but everywhere he received the same reply, "We don't want no new religion here." At the plantation the response was equally discouraging. At length he was directed to call upon old Aunt Sylvia, a leader in the neighborhood, who informed him that the only religious services they had were the "big meetings held out of doors in summer." The missionary found Aunt Sylvia interested in religious things, however, and finally proposed that a Sunday school be organized, to meet in Aunt Sylvia's house. This she at once refused to do, saying that she was the "mother of Noah's Ark Baptist Church" and therefore could not consider such a proposal. The missionary then

began a careful canvass of the entire neighborhood in search of some one to take the lead in conducting the Sunday school. Finally he was directed to "a fine Baptist preacher" as being the man most likely to assist him. The missionary found him plowing, and after stating the object of his visit was informed that his new-found friend was not a "book-learnt preacher" but a "powerful Baptist gospel preacher." The plantation overseer interrupted their conversation, attempting to drive the missionary away, but he was not to be diverted so easily. He requested that he be permitted to help the preacher in his plowing. When the day's work was done the missionary accompanied the preacher to his humble home and before retiring asked him to read a portion of Scripture. So illiterate was he that he took up an old hymn book, instead of a Bible, opened it, and holding it upside down, began to quote a passage of Scripture as though he were reading it. By tactful reasoning the missionary finally succeeded in securing his coöperation, and he promised to win Aunt Sylvia's assistance. The Sunday school was organized and met in Aunt Sylvia's little house. Boards were laid across chairs, for seats, and at every meeting the room was overcrowded. Later a Presbyterian negro minister was assigned by the Freedmen's Board to preach for these people occasionally and the response was far beyond their highest hopes. The little company was soon compelled to move from Aunt Sylvia's home, and for some time the services were held in a bush

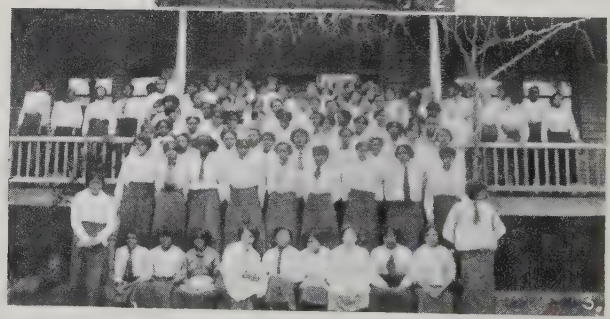
arbor. From this beginning two good Presbyterian churches have grown, besides an academy where the boys and girls for miles around are being educated. The work developed so encouragingly that the Freedmen's Board bought one thousand acres of land, divided it into ten-acre farms, erected small but convenient homes and sold them to negroes who were ambitious enough to want homes of their own, establishing a model community. To-day it is a clean, orderly, well-regulated Christian neighborhood. The Sunday school, the church and the academy are the centers of interest, and hundreds are being helped toward useful careers.

It should be emphasized at this point that the object of the Sunday-school missionary is not to organize Sunday schools only where he believes they will grow into churches. He labors from an entirely different standpoint. He is commissioned to take the means of religious teaching and training to the boys and girls who are not within reach of churches already organized. He gathers groups of twenty, thirty, forty or more children and young people, into the district schoolhouse or some other building, organizes them into Sunday school, places Christian literature in their hands, introduces the gospel into their homes and thus sets up a standard higher than they have heretofore known. It is the need of the children who are without Christian influences that impels the Sunday-school missionary to press forward. He must organize Sunday schools, irrespective of the possibility of their

growth into churches. True, he is ever on the alert to note and to encourage any movement toward development into church organization, and he advises the presbytery with reference to such possibilities, but the Sunday-school missionary is concerned chiefly and exclusively with the establishment of agencies for religious instruction (Sunday schools) and in helping them to adopt such plans and methods of work as will enable them to minister most helpfully to the spiritual and social needs of their neighborhoods.

The organized church, therefore, is a by-product of the rural Sunday school. Probably it is the most valuable by-product so far as such values may be measured. We cannot but rejoice in the wise religious strategy which has been exercised by our presbyteries in following the labors of the Sunday-school missionaries and in developing Presbyterian churches in so many places. It will be seen also, that in addition to the growth of Presbyterianism which inevitably results from the planting of rural Sunday schools, other denominations share in this by-product. Thus Sunday-school missions in the name of the Presbyterian Church are making a great contribution to the cause of Protestantism in general.

TRAINING WORKERS FOR THE KINGDOM



1. A Sunday school in the Tennessee mountains which has produced many consecrated Christian workers.
2. The product of a little mountain Sunday school. Now a school teacher and a Sunday-school superintendent.
3. Negro girls who have pledged themselves to engage in Sunday-school work during vacation, in their home neighborhoods.

CHAPTER V

TRAINING WORKERS FOR THE KINGDOM

One of the chief benefits resulting from the planting of a Sunday school in a neighborhood where no religious work has previously been attempted, is seen in the number of persons who for the first time in their lives are enlisted in Christian service as Sunday-school officers and teachers. When the Sunday-school missionary organizes a school, he chooses the best material available for his officers and teachers, but he cannot always take the high ground that is held by the church Sunday schools in the larger towns and cities, where they insist, as they should, that only church members shall be permitted to be officers and teachers. It frequently happens that the missionary is unable to find one Christian man or woman in the neighborhood. In one case a missionary was obliged to place a fourteen-year-old girl in charge of a little Sunday school. With the help of an old Scotch woman she kept the school together, and the work prospered. Within a short time her helper died, and the little girl was left with the entire responsibility of the school. She went on bravely, and her little school, which had grown to sixty members, began to make such an impression upon the community that those who had been indifferent before, now offered their

assistance. Evangelistic meetings were held and twenty persons professed conversion, after which a church was organized.

This scarcity of workers is one of the most discouraging problems of the Sunday-school missionary. Sometimes he is obliged to reorganize a school several times before he is able to find anyone who will be faithful, whose sincerity is beyond doubt, and whose life in the neighborhood is sufficiently exemplary to command the respect of the other families. A Sunday school in a rural district in Minnesota had for its first superintendent, a prize fighter. Under his leadership the school lived but a few weeks. The missionary revived it with a young lady school-teacher for superintendent. She was unwilling to give up her Saturday night dances, and soon the school closed again. Once more the missionary brought them together and they chose one of the leading men of the neighborhood for superintendent, but the missionary was not very hopeful because he was inclined to be profane, and had never shown any interest in religion. He possessed many good qualities, however, and the missionary realized that the school would succeed under this man if he would become a Christian; so he laid his plans to win him to Christ. With the help of the Spirit, he led this man to make a profession of his faith, and through his efforts the entire community experienced a revival. The prize fighter and his wife, as well as the dancing school-teacher, were among those who found salvation. Since that time

the Sunday school has never missed a session and these people are faithful teachers of classes. Thus the mission Sunday school develops its own workers. One cannot serve in a position of such responsibility without experiencing a personal blessing. Every Sunday-school teacher realizes how, in the preparation of the Sunday-school lessons, his own spiritual life has been developed. How much more must this be true with reference to those who are enlisted as teachers in these little schools in destitute places, and who for the first time in their lives are brought to study the Bible and the lesson helps with which they are provided, finding that the truths which they must teach to others are equally applicable to their own lives.

A Sunday-school missionary in the southwest, in organizing a Sunday school, could find but one woman in the neighborhood who would consent to be a teacher, but she was unwilling even after the missionary had appealed to her, to give up the habit of smoking a pipe, which she had practiced for many years. The missionary was obliged to accept her services; but later, upon visiting the school, he learned to his great delight that in preparing the lessons from week to week she had come to realize her depraved condition and her injurious example before the children of the Sunday school and had voluntarily given up this disgusting habit. Very often public school-teachers who never before have shown any interest in Sunday-school work are pressed into service. They find many compensa-

tions in this work; and in some cases the experience gained in the rural Sunday school has been a preparation for larger service elsewhere in later years. Several years ago a missionary organized a school in a destitute West Virginia community. The only available person to act as superintendent and teacher was Clinton G——, a young fellow who was teaching the district school. It was his first experience in Sunday-school work, but soon he became deeply interested. Several years later when visiting in one of the largest cities of the state the missionary met Mr. G——. He took him to the largest church in the city where he now conducts the largest organized Bible class of the city. Mr. G——'s opportunity of to-day had its beginning in the little Sunday school back in the hills.

The greatest work of the rural Sunday school, however, is the training of boys and girls who become Christian workers in churches and Sunday schools in other localities. Thousands of the young people from the homestead farms go to the towns and cities to enter business and professional careers. What do they take with them? What shall be their influence upon those with whom they associate in their new surroundings? Will they ally themselves with the church or will they avoid it? It is almost invariably true that the boys and girls trained in rural Sunday schools seek the church in the city which represents the denomination whose missionary organized the Sunday school for them, and

eventually they become its most faithful workers, especially in the Sunday school.

Not long ago a Sunday-school missionary was visiting a city church, and at the close of the service two young ladies came forward, whom the pastor introduced as "two of my best workers." They asked the missionary if he remembered them, but he was unable to recall any previous meeting. Then they told him that they had been pupils in a little Sunday school which he had organized and frequently visited, back in the pine woods. "It was there that we got the desire for something better, and we have been in Sunday-school work ever since," one of them declared. At that time they were attending the State Normal School, preparing to become public school-teachers.

A number of years ago a Sunday school was organized in a small neighborhood in northern Iowa. To strengthen the work, the missionary held evangelistic meetings during the following winter, and a number of the people professed conversion. Among them were a man, his wife and their entire family, including three sons. Afterwards they sold their farm in Iowa and moved to Ottertail County, Minnesota. Our Sunday-school missionary in that district found them in their new home and organized a Sunday school near them, enlisting them as leaders in the work. He declares that it would have been impossible to have had a Sunday school without their help, as they were the only Christians there. As the children grew, the need of educating

them became more and more apparent. So they sold out their farm and home and moved to St. Paul, where the young people could have the advantages of a college training. Here again they became workers in one of the leading churches. The last report that comes from this interesting family is that three of the sons are now ministers.

A Wisconsin Sunday-school missionary adds to this record of by-products of rural Sunday-school work the story of a young man who was brought into a Sunday school which he organized in a rural settlement where the greater part of the population consisted of Germans. The boys of the neighborhood made it a practice to play ball on Sunday afternoon on the school grounds, during the Sunday-school hour, thus making it almost impossible to maintain interest and attention in Sunday school. The superintendent in great discouragement wrote to the missionary about his trouble, so he arranged to visit them. He called at the home of three boys who seemed to be the leaders. The mother told him that he need not trouble himself to call upon them, as they were Catholics, and politely showed him the door. He went out to the barn, however, and there he met Chris, the oldest boy. Engaging him in conversation he told him what the superintendent had written, and asked him if he would not give up the ball-playing and attend the Sunday school, instead. As he was the leader, of course it would depend upon his actions whether or not the other boys would come. At first he hesitated, but at last he

promised that he would make the effort. He kept his promise and it was not long before Chris became a Christian, the other boys soon following his example. For over a year he was a teacher of the boys' class in that school. Now Chris is engaged in business in the city, where he is the superintendent of a flourishing Presbyterian Sunday school, which has an enrollment of more than one hundred and fifty pupils. One of the other boys is studying for the ministry and three other boys in that class are attending college, fitting themselves for their life's work.

In such experiences as these the Sunday-school missionary finds much encouragement. The knowledge that the boys and girls he gathers into the Sunday school to-day will be the men and women who will help to sustain churches and Sunday schools in other places in future years, and thus be the means of leading others into the ways of righteousness, is a constant source of inspiration to him. The story is told by a Colorado missionary of a chance meeting with a man whom he had known years before as the storekeeper in a little coal camp where a Sunday school representing the only religious influence in that region, had been maintained. "I have been away from Colorado for almost seven years," said the missionary as he greeted him, "and have not kept in touch with things here during that time. You had two boys in whom I was interested. I would like to ask you about them. When I organized the Tunday school there they at-

tended it. And whenever I visited the place they helped me by ringing the bell, filling the lamps with the oil which you furnished, and having the schoolhouse swept and in readiness for the service. What became of your boys? Did they stay with the teachings of the Sunday school and take Christ as their Saviour and example, or did they, like so many of the coal-camp boys, form habits of drunkenness, gambling and indulging in other vices?"

"They stayed with the Sunday school," replied the man. "Neither of them drinks or uses tobacco. I am proud of my boys. After completing the common school course they went to high school, and then through college. One of my boys is here visiting me now."

Hearing the conversation, the son, who was standing near, came forward. He was a fine, large fellow with a frank, open countenance, and handsome features. Approaching, he took the missionary's hand and said, 'Yes, I am one of the little boys who attended your Sunday school in C——. Come and see me when you are in my town. They call me 'professor' down there. I am principal of the schools and have ten teachers under me."

"What about your brother?" the missionary inquired.

"He is a chemist for the U—— Company."

"I am glad to learn that you have both done so well. You are not sorry you went to Sunday school, are you?"

"No indeed. That was the start to a better life. But for that school we might still be in the mining camp, digging coal, drinking whisky and wasting our life and opportunities." Both boys are leading workers in church and Sunday school, one of them being an elder, and the other an officer in the Sunday school.

Among the negroes of the South, the missionaries find it difficult to maintain some of their Sunday schools because so many of the boys and girls go to the towns and cities just at the time when their presence and influence could be helpfully exerted as Sunday-school teachers in their own neighborhoods. It is encouraging to know, however, that, wherever they go, the spiritual impressions received in the little Sunday school at home are not lost, and that their early training leads them into good associations in their new environment. One negro missionary who has kept in touch with some of these young people testifies that in nearly every case they have united with Presbyterian churches, and become Sunday-school teachers and leaders of Bible classes. At a Sunday school convention in North Carolina this missionary met a young man who had been a pupil in a little negro school in Virginia. He learned that upon going to his new home he had united with the church, and was an active Sunday-school worker. "Almost every Presbyterian church in the Presbytery of Southern Virginia is constantly receiving persons who were members of our mission schools in the rural districts," said the

missionary. "So I find that the apparent loss to the mission schools is often a gain to the churches in the towns and cities. In our mission schools they acquire the habit of Bible study, and ideals of Christian living. They begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness. I find that the missionary work in the rural districts is a feeder to the Presbyterian churches in the towns and cities."

A negro Sunday-school missionary who was in charge of the "Negro Section" of the great missionary exhibit, "The World in Chicago" in the spring of 1913, was greeted one day by a young negro woman who reminded him that she had been a pupil in a little Sunday school which he organized in a destitute neighborhood in Georgia, several years before. She told him that this Sunday school had given her the ambition to do something useful and that she had been educated and was now a teacher in a negro school in Chicago.

Similar testimony is furnished by missionaries who labor among the southern mountaineers. One of these workers, who has been the means of gathering hundreds of boys and girls from lowly mountain homes into mission Sunday schools, makes this statement: "In the past twelve years there have gone out from our work here about fifty men and women who are now holding lucrative positions in seven or eight different states, and are doing excellent Christian work. This is hard on the work here, for just as soon as these boys and girls are educated enough to do Sunday-school work, and

become of age, they leave home and seek associations more congenial to their new life. Never has one whom we have brought up in the Sunday school brought dishonor upon the work; but wherever they have gone they have been noted for their strict adherence to the teaching of God's Word."

During the few months of Sunday school held under a tree in a Kentucky mountain village, two young men were led to Christ. They went to Pikeville to school, and to-day one is county superintendent of public instruction in Pike County, Kentucky, and the other is a successful business man in Cincinnati. Both are deeply interested and active in Christian work.

In another mountain Sunday school a young man learned to read, beginning by spelling out the letters in the Bible, the only book he possessed. He has since become a local preacher and everywhere he goes, he testifies to the fact that it was the Sunday school which started him upon his work for Christ. From another little Sunday school in Tennessee a young man went to school. After he graduated he moved to a community in which there was not a church building, although it was the county seat. His influence there, in behalf of the Sunday school, was the means of beginning a work which has wrought many changes among that people. He is now a teacher in a government school in a western state and there, too, he is witnessing for Christ and active in Sunday-school work. "Everywhere I go," said a mountaineer missionary, "I meet young

fellows who stop and tell me about the little Sunday school back in the country, of which they were members and which I organized. In every case they seem to be doing well, and I am always glad to find that they are still interested in the Sunday school."

Correspondence from the field brings hundreds of illustrations of the results of the work of the rural Sunday school appearing in distant places. One missionary who has kept in touch with many of the children who have been gathered into Sunday schools through his efforts, takes pride in pointing to the number of boys and girls coming from unpromising localities, who have become faithful servants of the King in the places to which they have gone to engage in business and professional life. "About seven years ago," he writes, "I visited a godless neighborhood, where I found only one mother who really wanted a Sunday school. While visiting from house to house, I stopped at a place where the family were all away from home except the father and one boy about twelve years of age. The little fellow was too bashful to come near my buggy until I called him and told him that I was going to hold a gospel service at the schoolhouse and organize a Sunday school the next Tuesday evening. He said, 'Will there be anything adoin' before Tuesday?' He was there on time and attended quite regularly for three years, and then became a teacher of a class of boys. Soon afterwards he was elected superintendent of the Sunday school.

About two years ago he went to Montana to visit a brother who was holding down a claim and while there, he would gather a small company around him each Sunday and talk to them about the Sunday-school lesson, sometimes having as many as forty people present. His work soon developed into a Sunday school and not long afterwards a minister came to preach to the people. The young man did the work of a missionary among the people, and is now looking forward to going into the ministry, to which he feels that the Lord has called him.

"A few years ago two girls were brought into another of our Sunday schools, out on the prairie. They lived in a claim shack and worked hard every day, helping their father to carry away the stones, to break up the new land and to put in the crop. While doing all this they learned the Shorter Catechism in one week, and recited it, for which they each received a Bible given by the Board. They became very active in the Sunday school and last summer they both went to Montana, where each took a homestead. They are now teaching school and have organized Sunday schools in the districts in which they are teaching. They write me frequently, telling me how well the Sunday schools are prospering."

One of the chief elements of Sunday-school efficiency is the training of lives for Christian service. In this respect the rural Sunday school meets the efficiency test. The rural Sunday school cannot be judged by its attainments with reference to "front-

line standards," nor by its system of gradation of pupils and departments, but what it lacks from a pedagogical standpoint, is outweighed by the splendid contribution which it makes to the Church and the nation, in laying foundations of Christian character. "By their fruits ye shall know them." To such a test the rural Sunday school can bring a brilliant array of Christian men and women, whose influence for good has extended beyond the ability of man to measure.

RECRUITS FOR THE MINISTRY AND MISSIONARY SERVICE

The Sunday school in a Colorado coal camp. The superintendent became a successful Sunday-school missionary
The cowboy who became superintendent of a rural Sunday school, took a training course and is now an efficient Sunday-school missionary
This isolated rural Sunday school has produced two ministers.

CHAPTER VI

RECRUITS FOR THE MINISTRY AND MISSIONARY SERVICE

"As the result of our little Sunday school, there is a young man who is the pastor of the Presbyterian Church at F——; two more who are studying for the ministry at Maryville College; another in a law school, and still another taking a medical course. A young lady graduated last year from Miami University, another is teaching school in an eastern state, and two or three others are taking special courses in well-known colleges. I can give you the names of these young people if you want them."

This encouraging statement was made by a missionary with reference to a little Sunday school which he had established and nurtured in a godless neighborhood in eastern Kentucky. If a careful investigation were made, doubtless similar results would appear from the work of many other little Sunday schools, concerning whose existence the world may never hear, but whose spiritual impressions will continue to bear fruit among succeeding generations.

Not only does the rural Sunday school train workers for the churches of the towns and cities, but it furnishes the impulses to a complete conse-

cration of life to the service of Jesus Christ, in proclaiming his truth to others. Doubtless it would be found that at least three-fourths of those who are rendering faithful, devoted and self-denying service in mission fields, received the incentive and the encouragement to undertake this work as their life vocation, in some obscure rural Sunday school. Led by the Holy Spirit, they have gone forth to receive an education in Christian colleges and training schools for this specific task. It cannot be claimed that this is the result of special missionary teaching, because in most cases these young people received their religious instruction under untrained, humble-minded men and women, who probably were not in touch with the sources of missionary information. Is it not, rather, due to the fact that these young lives, in spite of their disadvantages, were being thoroughly impregnated, by teaching and example, with the simplest forms of gospel truth, which when they have gripped a life, are irresistible in their demands for expressions? "Tell the good news to others," is the first command which the gospel brings to us, and it comes with special force to those who are so circumstanced that they have seen and experienced its transforming power.

A missionary who had given many years of faithful service in the Sunday-school cause recently said:

"I have preached in localities and organized schools and churches where children ten, twelve, sixteen and even nineteen years old were growing up,

who had never been in a church and had never heard anyone preach but myself, and out of these very places have come many of the choicest experiences of my ministry and some of the most promising and permanent results. Work in many of the isolated communities does not mean permanency, but it does mean blessing. In such places, and through our work, many of our country boys and girls are sent out for an education. Many of these sturdy fellows have gone into the ministry and other professions, and many of the girls have entered upon useful and happy lives."

A Sunday-school missionary in the Northwest, who had a large number of rural Sunday schools under his care, became greatly concerned about one of these schools which he had experienced much difficulty in keeping alive. It would live for two or three months and then lapse, the missionary going each time and reviving it with new leaders. He realized that steps must be taken to produce a religious awakening in the neighborhood before anything of a permanent character could be done, so he announced that he would come to them to hold a series of evangelistic services. At first the people were inclined to ignore the effort and only a few attended the services. The missionary persevered, however, and before the meetings closed several had professed conversion. Among them was one little girl, the only member of her family who was brave enough to come forward; she asked to be baptized and received as a member of the

church in the next town. For a number of years afterwards this missionary was out of touch with this neighborhood, but one day while visiting the minister of a prominent church in Minneapolis, he was shown a photograph of a young woman dressed in Chinese costume. "Do you know that young lady?" the minister inquired. The missionary confessed that he had no recollection of ever having seen her. "Don't you remember the little Sunday school at K——, and the little girl who was converted in your meetings there? She came to the city to be educated, united with my church, and now she is a missionary in China," said the minister. "It was in that little Sunday school that she first experienced the desire to go to the foreign field."

Recently a young lady who graduated from the College of Idaho was accepted by a foreign mission board for missionary service in India. She came from a rural Sunday school in a Colorado settlement. Another young lady from the same institution, who had come from a little Sunday school planted several years ago in a Rocky Mountain mining town, has become a missionary teacher. She declared that she received her first desire to become a missionary when she was led to Christ by a consecrated teacher in that Sunday school.

From another Sunday-school missionary, who is laboring in a southern state, comes the report of a girl who had been reared in a godless home, in a neighborhood which had never experienced any Christian influences, who offered herself for for-

eign missionary service. She is now being trained for her life work in one of the Presbyterian colleges. Some of the finest examples of Christian consecration have come from the most unpromising places. The bad boy who is finally induced to come to the little Sunday school and whose presence in the school is a great trial to the superintendent and teacher, in the providence of God, may be a Robert Moffat or a Robert Morrison or another Alexander Mackay. Perhaps the neighborhood which the minister passes by as hopeless, may contain boys and girls whom God has chosen for large tasks in promoting his kingdom, and who await the coming of the Sunday-school missionary to establish a Sunday school for them. Thus the spiritual qualities which God has implanted in their hearts may be quickened into noble impulses.

Not only have rural Sunday schools been the means of producing missionaries for the foreign field. There are several instances in which the gospel candle which has been lighted in an obscure community has sent forth its rays of lighthouse power and penetration into many a dark place in our own land, through the medium of a life transformed. In one case a little Sunday school made out of one of the worst boys in the neighborhood a most efficient Sunday-school missionary. This is how it was done.

At the age of twenty-five he could read but little and was notoriously wild and wicked, but he was quite regular in his attendance upon the Sunday

school which was held in the log schoolhouse. The missionary was holding gospel services and when, at the close of one of the meetings, he asked all who wanted Christ as their Saviour to stand, this young man, with a look of determination on his face, arose. He said, "I do want to accept Christ, but it 'pears like sumthin' just keeps a holdin' of me back." But two or three weeks later, in spite of the jeers of the boys, he stayed after Sunday school to seek the Lord. He had waited for that "quawr feelin'," but finally came, just as he was, took Christ at his word, and soon was praising God for saving his soul. At once he was filled with an overwhelming desire to know the Word of God and teach it. He said, "I want to get an education so that I can teach the true Word of God." He was given a class of boys in the Sunday school and labored earnestly for the salvation of each one. He learned to read, chiefly from the Bible, spelling out the words as he went along. He worked at logging with an elder brother and two other wild fellows who tried in every way to get him to swear, to drink, or in some way to "break over," but the Lord kept him.

The next spring he went to live with an uncle in a western state, but before going he visited every home in that neighborhood, begging the unsaved ones to accept Christ. From Illinois he wrote: "My uncle and aunt is awful kind to me. They didn't have nary Bible in their house when I came here. Uncle is a sinner, but she belongs to the church. I am

going to try awful hard to get uncle to give his self to the Lord. There has been just one meeting here since I came, and I get so lonesome when I can't 'tend meeting and Sunday school." But he went to work, and soon he wrote, "Well, we've got a prayer meeting started up here and a Sunday school, and I am a teacher."

He persevered in his determination to get an education, working his way and hoping some day to be able to lead others to Christ in missionary service. Later he entered Moody Bible Institute, where he studied nearly two years, fitting himself to become a Sunday-school missionary. Through his labors scores of Sunday schools have been planted and hundreds of lives have been blessed.

A young man studying for the gospel ministry in a western theological seminary, came from a little mountain Sunday school which a Presbyterian Sunday-school missionary organized a number of years ago in a notoriously wicked neighborhood. It was with great difficulty that the missionary succeeded in maintaining this school, largely because of the feuds that had existed among the leading families for two or three generations, making it almost impossible for him to obtain the consent of anyone to take charge of the work. The young man was a member of one of the feudist families and had been wounded several times in attacks that had been made upon him. Under the regenerating influence of the Word as he had been taught it in the little Sunday school into which he was induced to come,

he found Christ and resolved to seek an education in order to prepare himself for the Lord's service. He proved to be an earnest student, and made rapid progress. In the seminary he was said to be one of the most capable young men of the entire student body. During his senior year he received a number of flattering invitations to accept calls to churches where he would have every advantage, but he declined them all, saying that he had resolved to go back to his own people and devote his life to service in their behalf, in spite of the meager support and self-denial which such a course must involve.

The little Sunday schools in the southern mountains have been most prolific in furnishing men of this type. A most remarkable record is that of two rural Tennessee Sunday schools. From one of these Sunday schools forty-three ministers have come, twenty-six of whom were Presbyterian, and they are all making good. During the past twelve years they have been without a pastor about one-half of the time, but the Sunday school goes on without interruption. The other Sunday school points to twenty-five of its young men who have become Presbyterian ministers.

In the Kentucky mountains, Perry Abbitt, the son of a widow, had the reputation in the neighborhood of being a "powerful bad boy." He had never been subject to restraint and he delighted in disturbing meetings by firing a revolver and throwing stones. A Sunday school was organized in that neighborhood and the missionary conceived the

idea of engaging Perry to help him keep order among the boys. He accepted the responsibility and the plan worked admirably. If a boy was disorderly Perry took him in hand and it was not long before all disturbances were suppressed. Three years later Perry was one of twenty-three who made a profession of religion. Soon afterwards this young man felt called to the ministry, and he is now the successful pastor of three churches which were organized largely through his efforts.

Two young men in a Missouri town situated far back from the railroad were set to work by a Sunday-school missionary, who, finding that they were interested in Bible study, placed them in charge of a new Sunday school he had organized. One was appointed superintendent and the other undertook the care of a Bible class. Although they were obliged to walk many miles each Sunday, they became increasingly interested and through their efforts the little Sunday school soon doubled in membership and attendance. In the Bible class, teachers were trained for other classes. Besides having a transforming effect upon the community, their work in this little Sunday school developed the spiritual life of these two young men. One of them, who had a good position as an expert electrician, resolved to devote his life to the gospel ministry and is now pursuing his studies in a western city. The other young man, who was leader of the Bible class and who was studying law, changed his plans and

entered upon his preparatory course for the ministry.

Possibly one of the best ways to overcome the scarcity of candidates for the gospel ministry is to give our Christian young men some local missionary work to do. There are hundreds of churches in the larger towns that could be sustaining mission Sunday schools in rural neighborhoods within a radius of a few miles, thus providing for the spiritual needs of people who cannot avail themselves of the opportunities which the church offers to those who are living in the towns. At the same time it would open an avenue of service for the young men and young women of the church who could be placed in charge of such schools. In this way they would become zealous for the service of Christ. The mere urging of our boys to choose the ministry as a vocation will not produce any material increase in the number of candidates offering themselves; but if we give our young men a taste of the joys and blessings of Christian service through such opportunities as a mission Sunday school affords, the attractiveness of the ministry would be irresistible. Then we may safely leave it to the wise operation of the Spirit of God to call out from among them those whom he has chosen for such service. A young man who was a member of a Presbyterian church in Denver was placed in charge of a little Sunday school in a coal-mining camp several miles back in the mountains. He impressed that entire neighborhood with his fine Christian

spirit and example, and the Sunday school grew most encouragingly. Although he occupied a good business position he felt more and more impelled to give his life to the work of winning children to the Sunday school, and was willing to make sacrifices in order to do so. After some special preparation he began his work as a Sunday-school missionary in a western state and has been unusually successful.

Another young man who owned a horse ranch in eastern Colorado became the superintendent of a little Sunday school near his home. He became converted, and expressed the desire to devote his life to some form of Christian service. The Sunday-school missionary who started the school saw the possibilities in him, and persuaded him to take a course of study preparatory to becoming a Sunday-school missionary. He was delighted with the suggestion, sold his ranch and took a year of special training, upon the completion of which he took up the work of organizing Sunday schools in a frontier field in the far West.

Besides the missionaries and ministers who come from its ranks, the rural Sunday school develops many Christian teachers who find abundant opportunity for missionary service in the rural neighborhoods to which they are assigned as public school teachers. A Sunday-school missionary in southeastern Missouri has taken several young women from mission Sunday schools into his own home in the city, where they have the opportunity of a nor-

mal-school course. Girls who were being reared in humble homes in the back country regions, with but two or three months' schooling each year, have been filled with the desire for an education, and the big-hearted Sunday-school missionary has helped as many of them as his meager salary would allow. When these girls complete their education and go out as teachers, every one of them becomes in a sense a Sunday-school missionary. Realizing what the Sunday school has done for them, they embrace every opportunity to teach the Bible and impress its truths upon the lives of the boys and girls whom they are appointed to teach in the day school. One of these girls wrote to the missionary regarding her experience in a rural district where she had gone to teach school:

"Before Christmas we had no Bibles nor much material to work with, but we just made the most of what we had. We began with the Lord's Prayer. I had all the children memorize it; and we all stand and repeat it every morning. They think the day is not started right if they do not have that the first thing. One morning a pretty little five-year-old fellow fell off the steps as the children were marching in for 'time books' at nine o'clock. He really had a bad cut on his head and I was considerably worried about it. His mother lived near and I had her come for him. The result of it was that school began thirty minutes late. I knew it would be a hurried morning and so I began by telling the children abruptly that they must get to their studies in

order to get through with all our morning work. Not a book came out! Disappointed faces were on all sides. Almost instantly, however, one little fellow blurted out, 'Say, ain't we goin' to have our Lord's Prayer this morning?' We had it.

"Our Christmas tree, the children's first Christmas tree, will, I think, be long remembered by them all. Many of them learned for the first time what Christmas means in its deepest and truest sense. The children's program was well attended and we tried to make it count for Christ. Since Christmas we have the Bibles, Scripture calendars, and those pretty little red Gospels of John that you provided us with. Those little red booklets took! On the cover of the booklets these words are printed: 'Carry this book in your pocket.' They follow out the rule to the very letter and now, wherever you see one of my boys and girls you also catch a glimpse of red peeping from an apron or overalls pocket. They don't carry them in their pockets all the time. No, indeed! Even little six-year-old Cortney spells out every word and can read, sensibly, parts of the first three chapters of John. At various times during the day, in spare minutes, the children can be seen poring over these little books. Some of the children can read a good portion of them already."

One of the most encouraging things about the Sunday school, especially the rural Sunday school, is the way in which its work and influence multiply. A little school in a remote district may be the means

of setting in motion spiritual forces that will have a far-reaching effect upon the progress of the kingdom. One little boy brought to Christ in a little Sunday school becomes the spiritual leader of thousands; another becomes an organizer of Sunday schools where a multitude of boys and girls are led into paths of righteousness and service for Christ. A little girl becomes a missionary in a heathen land, leading darkened souls into light; another is a Christian teacher in a destitute neighborhood, all multiplying many hundredfold the good influence and teaching of the rural Sunday school where they received their first glimpse of better things and where the ambition to attain them was awakened.

Aside from those who have given their life service to the Master's service, there is yet a greater company of men and women engaged in useful pursuits who are practicing in business and professional life, as well as in their homes, the principles of the gospel teaching they received in the rural Sunday school of their childhood days, where the foundation stones of their characters were laid. They are church workers, Sunday-school teachers, leaders and helpers in every good cause. Do we look for the social influence of the gospel? We may find it here. Do we need evidence as to the social effect of missionary activity? We may find it in abundance in the great outreach of the work of the rural Sunday school.

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF RURAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL WORK

1 A contrast to the condition in which the Sunday-school Missionary found them.

2 High school which resulted from the awakening of a community wrought by a little Sunday-school on the plains.

3 The home of five orphan girls reared in destitute circumstances by the Sunday-school missionary who supplied their needs.

4 The Sunday-school Missionary and helpers taking Christmas to destitute families in the Southern mountains.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF RURAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL WORK

A little cowboy town on the plains of eastern Colorado furnishes ideal conditions for demonstrating the value of Sunday-school missions in unifying the social forces of an entire community. The student of the country-church and rural-life problem would find in this neighborhood an encouraging illustration of a religious monopoly, where the one Christian organization ministers to every phase of community life. The Sunday-school missionaries of the Presbyterian Church are exceedingly careful not to encourage the development of churches in communities already supplied with churches of other denominations. Indeed it is hardly possible for "over-churched" conditions to develop from the Sunday-school missionary's efforts, because his work is confined almost exclusively to the regions that are unchurched and pastorless.

The country round about this town is settled largely by homesteaders who located their claims several years ago, and have been devoting themselves faithfully to the development of homes in compliance with the homestead laws of the country. The Sunday-school missionary visited this community with the intention of establishing a Sunday school and rendering such other assistance as might

be necessary. He was surprised to learn that the women of the community had organized and incorporated an aid society, the purpose of which was to raise funds for the erection of a church. It developed that they had been engaged in this enterprise for some months when the missionary found them, and that they had accumulated a substantial fund. It happened that on the very day the missionary reached the neighborhood the ladies were holding a meeting at one of the ranch homes. This seemed to be a providential opportunity, so he drove out to have a conference with them. After learning their plans he pointed out the advantages of becoming affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. They readily agreed to the proposition and shortly afterwards the organization was effected, the money in the treasury of the society, together with title to six good lots, being contributed, and plans adopted for the erection of a beautiful little pressed-brick building. This was completed a few months later at a total cost of about thirty-five hundred dollars. Special services were held, as a result of which twelve persons were converted and the entire community deeply stirred. The building has a well-equipped basement, and a number of the ranch people living from four to fifteen miles out of town, bring their lunch baskets on Sundays, and at the close of the morning service retire to the basement, spread the tables, and sit down together for an hour of Christian fellowship. Some of those who come the farthest remain during the afternoon, serving

an evening lunch, in order that they may have the benefit of the services of the entire day.

A Senior Endeavor Society of thirty-two active and fifteen associate members has been organized, and a Junior Society of about fifteen members. As there was no suitable reading matter available for the use of those who spent their afternoons in the chapel, a library, consisting of well-selected books, together with religious papers and magazines, was secured. The local Grange holds its meetings in the basement of the chapel. The village brass band of twenty pieces meets there for practice every Thursday night, one of the elders of the church acting as leader. Those who are ill or in distress of any kind are cared for, whether they are members of the organization or not. Recently, the ladies, hearing that a large family in which there was sickness, needed assistance, took several of their number, with a sewing machine, in a farm wagon, and drove six miles to spend the day with the mother of this family, to help her with the housework and do her sewing. In another case a neighbor was taken sick. In order to help him with his farm work, the young men arranged to spend an afternoon hauling fodder for the stock on his ranch. Such a helpful Christian spirit, manifested in these practical ways, has made this organization the center about which the life of the entire community clusters. There is no need for any other church. Few of these people were reared in Presbyterian families, but they are glad to be affiliated with the denom-

ination that showed an interest in them in the time of their need.

Similar conditions are found at B——, another frontier town, seventeen miles from the railroad. This neighborhood consists of a country store and post office with but the one religious organization. The Sunday school ministers in a most effective manner to the needs of the people for a distance of many miles in every direction. One feature of the work is an institute which is held once a year and which all the people are invited to attend, bringing samples of vegetables, grains and flowers, to display the products of their labors. A large quantity of vegetables and grains is brought in and artistically arranged about the room and on the platform. These institutes are attended by one hundred and fifty or two hundred people.

At noon a large tent is erected, under which the tables are spread. In the afternoon a game of ball is arranged for all who wish to participate. While this is in progress, the regular program for the day is taken up for the benefit of those who are not interested in the ball game, and at least two hours are devoted to the discussion of practical Sunday-school topics. At the conclusion of the ball game the players and their friends come into the chapel to hear an evangelistic address. The spirit of the whole occasion is beautiful to witness, and the people depart to their homes with the feeling that they have spent a profitable day, under Christian auspices, not forgetting to recognize the bountiful hand

of the loving Father who crowns the labors of their hands with such an abundant harvest. The neighborhood was first discovered by the Sunday-school missionary when he was driving over the plains one day with his buckboard and ponies. The present ideal country community is the outgrowth of his labors among them.

Another example of a frontier community whose needs are being effectively served through the work of the Sunday school may be found in a new town in the Northwest, located in a region which has but recently been opened to settlement. Farmers seeking cheap land poured into this region and took up quarter sections. All the discouragements of pioneer life entered into the experiences of these people during the first two or three years, but the little Sunday school organized by the Presbyterian missionary held them together during those trying times. The superintendent of the little school and his wife, by their example of devotion and unselfishness, made the Sunday school an institution of community interest and popularity. Many of the newcomers were inexperienced in country life, but in every need they found a helpful friend at the home of this Sunday-school superintendent. Scarcely a day passed but some one in need of some assistance came to this home, and none was turned away empty. It might be that a neighbor's horse was sick, or the little baby of a family three or four miles away had the whooping cough, or perhaps still another neighbor's horse had a barb wire cut,

and danger of blood poison was threatening; no matter what was the nature of the trouble, it was to these good people that the whole neighborhood went for assistance. Not only were they called upon for help during the day, but also in the night, and there was always the same cheerful response.

They had no funds with which to erect a chapel, so they cleared out the loft of a corn house and converted it into a meeting place. Although the families were widely scattered, the attendance at the Sunday school averaged more than one hundred, at every session. All through the long, severe winters they kept the Sunday school in existence. During the summer a student preacher gave them occasional services. A men's club was organized, which included in its membership the men from nearly every homestead for miles around. This club provides concerts, literary entertainments, suppers and debates, and in spite of the fact that no outside talent is available, they have made these occasions exceedingly enjoyable. But the Sunday school is the center of the entire work. Attendance at the Sunday school is considered a part of the educational program of the men's club. A large men's Bible class has been formed, and is taught by a woman who is homesteading, but who has been trained in scientific farming, and who, by profession, is a veterinary surgeon. In a new country like this a woman of such qualities merits and receives the respect and esteem of the frontiersmen.

In spite of the long distances that must be traversed, the young people come together for musical training for two hours every week, and seldom do they miss a single meeting. They have a good choir and an orchestra for every religious service. A well equipped library has been secured and is patronized by every family. There is no other church or Sunday school in this entire neighborhood.

Nor is there any need for any additional religious organization. This one school reaches all the people, provides religious education for the children and young people, besides social life and recreation for entire countryside. This is being done in a community without any of the modern conveniences, with no church equipment, not even a chapel.

Another very interesting illustration of the community service of a rural Sunday school is seen in the work at L——, one of the oldest towns in northern Colorado. For many years the different pastors of a neighboring town visited the community in turn and held religious services in the schoolhouse, maintaining a Sunday school during portions of each year with varying success. Occasionally evangelistic services were held by an itinerant preacher and an effort made to crystallize the results into church organization, but for some reason all such attempts were fruitless, and the community went on as before, without even a Sunday school, the children roaming about or picking berries on Sunday, just as they felt inclined.

The Sunday-school missionary had been carefully watching the situation as he passed back and forth through the town on his trips from the plains to the mountains above, and early one summer he visited the people and announced a meeting at the schoolhouse to consider the question of organizing a Sunday school. A former superintendent was sought out and invited to be present. He promised to come with the distinct understanding that he was not to be asked again to take charge of the school. According to appointment sixteen came together, and, after a season of prayer and singing, it was decided to have a school. No one could be found who would accept the position of superintendent. Finally the missionary agreed to come each Sunday and conduct the school until a suitable person could be secured to take the place. In less than a month a young man volunteered to undertake the work, and very soon the attendance grew to fifty.

In the fall a series of meetings was held in the schoolhouse. Upon the missionary's arrival an effort was made to secure a boarding place for him. He found that the people were quite indifferent. Sixteen families were visited before either room or board could be obtained. At the beginning of the meetings some of the boys in the community who had not been attending the Sunday school, determined to break up the services. They came early, climbed in and out through the open windows, shouted around the outside of the building, whispered and laughed during the services un-

til it became necessary to call an officer to quiet the disturbance. The missionary persevered, however, and determined to put forth every effort in their behalf before he would give up the fight against those evil surroundings. The interest increased as the days went by, and at the end of three weeks thirty-eight persons expressed a desire to make a profession of their faith in Christ. They now have a Sunday school numbering seventy-five with a Home Department and a Cradle Roll. They are also conducting a mission school at another point, where a chapel building has been erected. These people have a missionary vision and have found a blessing in passing on to others the light that they have received. The community now has a reputation for Sabbath observance. The people are orderly and respectful in the house of God. Nearly all of the large company of young people are earnest, active Christians. So, from the small, unpromising beginning, has grown an organization which under the directing hand of God, is molding and shaping the character and destiny of a community of at least six hundred souls, making them not only law-abiding, but worthy to become citizens of the kingdom of our Lord.

The Sunday school not only develops the religious life of the community, but it has awakened them to their needs in other directions. Previous to the arrival of the Sunday-school missionary there were no district schools, and the children were dependent upon the town schools several miles away

for their education. Consequently many of them received no schooling at all. The coming of the Sunday school created the demand for a day school, and the people persevered until they obtained it.

Very recently the four school districts centering about this place have been consolidated, and a beautiful building has been erected at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars, and fully equipped. There are now more than two hundred and fifty pupils enrolled in this school, fifty of whom are in the high-school department. A home for the superintendent has been erected on the grounds, and the entire plant is modern in every detail. People are now moving to this community because of the opportunity afforded to educate their children and the many other advantages which accompany these improved conditions. Thus this Sunday school is widening its scope of influence year by year, and working hand in hand with the public school, providing the religious training which the latter cannot give.

In several instances the coming of the Sunday school into a community has been the means of creating a demand for better educational facilities. In a mining town of Arizona where a missionary experienced considerable opposition upon the occasion of his first visit, and where he could not find a home that would entertain him overnight, the Sunday school, which eventually was organized, opened the way for the establishment of a day school. As the missionary called on the people they told him that they had no public school, and as the

township had not yet been districted there were no funds for school purposes. The mining company had promised to give them a place to school their children but had not done so. Investigation revealed the fact that there were at least fifty children in town who ought to be in school. The missionary called upon the officers of the company and made arrangements for the erection of a chapel, which could be used for Sunday school and day school as well. The missionary in the meantime took the enrollment and a teacher was employed.

In several little mountain towns in eastern Kentucky where mission Sunday schools were established, day schools soon followed, and thus the boys and girls from those mountain cabins, who previously were without any adequate educational opportunities, have been given a start which has led many of them into useful careers.

A negro Sunday-school missionary makes the statement that one-half the negro children get no schooling whatever. Careful analysis of the reports of state superintendents showing the attendance by grades, indicates that the average child, including whites, who attends school at all, stops with the third grade. In North Carolina the average citizen gets only 2.6 years; in South Carolina, 2.5 years; in Alabama 2.4 years of schooling, both private and public. In these states, in small, crude schoolhouses, under teachers receiving an average salary of twenty-five dollars a month, children have been receiving an average of five cents' worth of

education a day for eighty-seven days only, in each year. Here again in some cases the educational institution has followed the opening of the Sunday school. The first negro Sunday school in a Georgia county was organized by a Sunday-school missionary several years ago. Out of this Sunday school an academy has grown, and under the wise direction of our Freedmen's Board, it is doing a remarkable work among the negro boys and girls of that region. The consensus of opinion is that this whole county, and the adjacent counties, as well, have been greatly blessed and benefited by the organization of Sunday schools. All agree that these Sunday schools have developed the spiritual and intellectual life of these needy negroes, leading the way to better social conditions.

It has been truly said that in hundreds of cases the Sunday school stands in the place of the church, and does the work of the church. This statement must be interpreted, of course, in the light of the broader conception of the church's function in a community. The Sunday school cannot, of course, provide regular preaching services, although the Sunday-school missionary holds a preaching service every time he visits the neighborhoods where Sunday schools have been planted. At such times the people crowd the little schoolhouse to overflowing, even on week nights. The Sunday school serves the community in the largest sense by the Christian standards which it sets up, the Christian principles which it teaches and the Christian prac-

tices which it encourages. In new neighborhoods especially, opportunities for Christian service are constantly arising, and the spirit of neighborliness is being put to the test almost daily. The sharing of mutual blessings, and hardships as well, the sympathetic interest that is developed as they come to know one another more intimately, all center in the little community Sunday school which binds them together in a bond of mutual helpfulness and dependence.

A Sunday-school missionary in a southwestern state tells of the work of a Sunday school which is located one hundred and twenty miles from the railroad. There is but one Christian family in the entire neighborhood. The father superintends the Sunday school, buries the dead and, by virtue of his civil office, performs marriage ceremonies. A woman in one of the small mining camps in Arizona is the only Christian in the entire district. She is superintendent of the Sunday school and is called upon to conduct funerals. One day she was asked to conduct the funeral of one of the roughest miners in camp. At first she shrank from the task, but she could not permit the man to be buried without some sort of religious ceremony, so she finally agreed to conduct the service.

Very helpful service is frequently rendered by the Sunday-school missionaries in relieving the material necessities of families in their fields who are in distress and want, through failure of crops or other misfortune. Quantities of clothing are

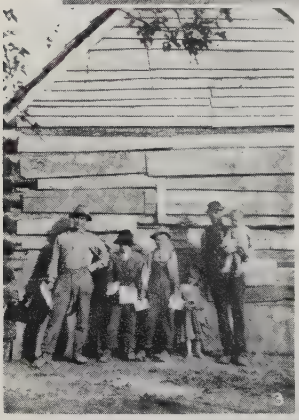
shipped to them during the winter months by churches in eastern states, and many a discouraged family has thus been assisted in a time of urgent need. Following a severe drought one of our Colorado missionaries organized a committee consisting of representatives of all the Presbyterian churches of Denver, and practical methods were devised for gathering funds, and distributing food, clothing and fuel to the worthy people on the homesteads, whose crops had failed. During the winter at least five thousand garments were sent directly to the homes of these people. One hundred families were provided with groceries and fuel for almost three months. These people were very grateful for this timely assistance and were enabled to remain on their homesteads, planting their crops with good prospects for fair returns the next season. As a direct result of this ministry, there was an increased interest in the organization and maintaining of new Sunday schools in all these communities.

On another occasion this missionary received word that two young people and a married woman living in three different communities where he had labored were in the hospitals of Denver for operations. During the woman's illness three of her children were buried, out on the plains. A number of visits were made to these people, words of comfort and cheer spoken, and other helpful ministrations given. A missionary in western Kansas gives us an interesting description of similar work which he has done among needy families on

his field; and points to some of the good results that have followed: "For three years they have been 'going out,'" he writes. "Each year it has been a little harder on the Sunday schools out there and each year some of them have had to give up because there were not enough people left. In spite of this situation there are little neighborhoods here and there where the people are holding on, and staying, and intend to stay, and many of the people are making good and can stay. Many of these communities have had no religious services but the Sunday school. They have appreciated what we have been doing to help them and what we have been doing has been 'doing good.' In one of our neighborhoods, the superintendent who has been doing a self-sacrificing work for the last six years, where he has had strong opposition because of his upright life, said: 'The people out here are acting differently from what they did. They are talking differently, too. They are treating me differently and they are taking a different attitude toward the Sunday school. I don't know what did it. The only thing that I can see that could be the cause of it is the clothing and things that you have been sending out here for the past three years. The folks have needed those things badly and they have appreciated them and the way they were sent out. I don't see anything else that could have made the change in the folks here and I believe that these kindly ministrations have been the cause of their changing feelings.' "

Again the Sunday school brings improvements into the homes. The missionaries who labor among the southern mountaineers give repeated testimony to the improved conditions of the little cabin homes of those who come under the influence of the Sunday school, and this is one of the most effective ways of spreading the influence of the Sunday school among those who are inclined to be indifferent toward it. Though some may oppose all innovations, they cannot fail to see the improvement which takes place in the homes of those who are connected with the Sunday school. Curtains appear at the windows, better furniture is purchased, fences are repaired and yards cleaned up. The children are cleaner, the women are neater in their dress, and gradually the aspect of the entire community gives evidence of the new and higher influence that has come into their lives. Here again we may see some of the transforming social effects of gospel teaching. The development of a neighborly attitude; the awakening of the desire to render service to others in the commonplace things of everyday life; the joy that is found in every opportunity to do good; all bear testimony to the fact that the Word has gripped human lives, bringing them into vital connection with Him who teaches his followers that even so small a service as the giving of a cup of cold water shall not lose its reward.

WAYSIDE EVANGELISM



1. The Sunday-school Missionary and his camping outfit, equipped to spend weeks on the road.
2. The superintendent and two teachers in a Sunday school on the Kansas plains.
3. The only literature they receive is the Sunday-school paper.
4. A welcome wayside visit to an isolated family.

CHAPTER VIII

WAYSIDE EVANGELISM

A feature of rural Sunday-school work which makes it a most helpful form of evangelism is the house-to-house visitation. The successful Sunday-school missionary finds this one of the most fruitful and refreshing of the many and varied services which he is called upon to perform. He is the pastor of scattered flocks who have no other pastoral care. Often he is called upon to minister to the sick and the needy; to cheer those who have become discouraged; to relieve those who are in poverty, and in various other ways to emulate the example of Him "who went about doing good." It is frequently his privilege to be the first representative of the gospel to visit the lonely, isolated homes of those who have gone out as pioneers into the newer parts of the country. Families who are living in localities far removed from any church or other Christian influence, and who have fallen into the careless ways that are the result of spiritual neglect, are brought back to the days when they were interested in church work in their former homes, and enjoyed the blessings and privileges which the church with its various activities brought to them. If the Sunday-school missionary did nothing else but minister in helpful ways to these "mar-

ginal peoples," as one missionary has characterized them, his services would be worth while, and worthy of the denomination that sends him forth upon such a mission of love and mercy. Homes where the name of God never was uttered except in profane speech have been transformed by the visit of a Sunday-school missionary. Family altars have been erected and a Christian atmosphere has been created; gentleness and forbearance take the place of crudeness and unkindness. Children are reared to love and study God's Word. The Sabbath is restored and God is recognized as the head of the household.

When a "Home Department Quarterly" was handed to a woman living in a little shack on the Wyoming border, she said to the Sunday-school missionary, "I am so glad you called; I was just wishing for something of this kind." She had gone there from Florida to take up a homestead claim, and he was the first Christian worker she had met. In another home he called before the family had finished breakfast. When he mentioned the subject of the Sunday school they said, "Why, we have just been talking about the need and the possibilities of having a Sunday school out here." At another home which he visited, where he found both the husband and wife at home, he was told that the man had run away from a Christian home when he was thirteen years of age, and had drifted into that new country. Here, under various circumstances, he had remained for twenty-six years. He said

that for some reason he had always felt a restraining hand whenever tempted to indulge in the excesses of frontier life. Now, in middle life, as reverses had come, he and his wife had felt the need of better things. "What a joy," said the missionary in referring to this incident, "to talk freely with these dear people and to kneel in that humble home for a little talk with the heavenly Father and our blessed Lord. After nearly three years of service in this large field of far-scattered people I am coming to realize how much it means to be a pastor to shepherdless people and as far as possible a friend to all. May the Lord help us all to be faithful to the simple, plain tasks which are always ours."

A missionary who has an extensive territory to cover in the southeastern section of Washington and who never neglects an opportunity to speak a word of cheer in the homes he passes on his journeys, describes frontier life in that region in a way that reveals the need of such a system as our church is maintaining through its rural Sunday-school work. "The summers are short," he writes, "and they must make hay while the sun shines. The winters are long, the snow deep, the mountains impassable and of necessity as well as from inclination they must remain buried throughout the long winter in their snow-bound cañons. So generous was the spirit and grace of hospitality among the people I visited without hope of reward, and always with such kindness and consideration, that it more than

compensated me for the long tramps, rough climbs, discomforts, drenches and dangers which I experienced in visiting them. It was worth 'hitting a trail' of over one hundred and thirty-five miles, blistering one's feet, and dodging the ubiquitous rattlesnake in these hot cañons."

It may be difficult for us to imagine what the visit of the Sunday-school missionary means to people who are so isolated, and so unprivileged with reference to religious things. The men come in from the field; they bring in the children; and all listen reverently while the missionary reads a portion of Scripture and prays with them. It gives them new courage for their struggle.

Quite recently a letter was received at the office of the Board which sends out these Sunday-school workers, from a woman who, through a chance meeting, directed one of these missionaries to a neighborhood where the people were in great need of encouragement. Coming from one who wrote from actual knowledge of the situation it forms a very valuable contribution to this consideration of the benefits of the "wayside evangelism" which is peculiar to the work of the Sunday-school missionary. This is the letter:

"Last summer, a man sent out by your Board held a meeting in the sand-hill country of eastern Wyoming, concerning which I have had it in mind to write you ever since I came to learn what that meeting had meant to the people there, it being my thought that my doing so would help you to under-

stand how your work does bless the lives of the people of these isolated districts, and that it would give you pleasure and encouragement to be made acquainted with the little incident that I shall relate.

"My mother, two brothers and myself reside on homesteads in G—— County, Wyoming, not far west from the Nebraska line. The country is new, its resources limited; the struggle for existence a real struggle. The settlers are scattered, in straitened circumstances, with the exception, now and then, of a well-to-do cattleman. There is no social life and considerable lack of neighborly interest and loyalty as yet.

"On a train one day, I met your missionary. I had recently come from my homestead and my heart was full of the thought of the needs of the people of that valley. At once I spoke to him of the need of some one who could carry to them the message that Christian people beyond the hills inclosing that little settlement were interested in them, cared for them, and that God cared also. He responded to my statement with a hearty, 'I will go myself.' He kept his word, going into the valley and meeting in their homes as many of the people as he could, and on Sunday preaching to them in their schoolhouse.

"Where life is so great a struggle, where people are so isolated, they become careless, discouraged, indifferent, selfish, drift very far away from the things of God. I had the feeling that the people of this particular settlement would be hard to reach,

but those who came in contact with your missionary were all won."

In this feature of rural Sunday-school work, the distribution of religious literature plays an important part. Through the visitation of scattered homes the Sunday-school missionary is able to place the Sunday-school lesson helps and story papers, as well as tracts and leaflets, in the hands of those who do not have the advantage of free libraries and who in many instances, are financially unable to subscribe for current magazines. A Sunday-school missionary asked a boy to whom he had "given a lift" along the road, if he had a Bible at home. "Yes," replied the boy, "we have two," mentioning the names of two large mail order houses whose catalogues are found in nearly every homestead shack.

It means something, also, to have literature coming into these homes, bearing the imprimatur of a religious organization. It is an introduction at least, if nothing more, to the spiritual forces that are at work in the land and an indication that they are endeavoring to reach out, even in this small way, after those who are temporarily beyond the influence of the Church, Sunday school and the other blessings which the permanently established forms of Christianity would bring to them. Thousands of pamphlets and Sunday-school papers are distributed in this way during the course of a year's work. The small editions of the Gospels have been found particularly useful.

Some of the missionaries keep a record of the names of the families they visit and mail Sunday-school papers to them occasionally. In regions where the mail service is irregular and where very little good reading matter enters, these silent messengers of the gospel are appreciated and are frequently the means of bringing many a lonely man or woman back to God. One of these missionaries, in traveling over a section of country where he had been obliged to walk more than one hundred miles, saw a man some distance away slowly making his way down the rocky trail, leading his horse. As he came nearer, the missionary greeted him, calling him by name, having seen it on the letter box which he had passed a short while before. He seemed startled and yet pleased at being addressed by a stranger. The missionary then introduced himself and told him his mission. He found that the man was interested in better things. He said he had always attended Sunday school and church when he was "at home in New York and Philadelphia." He had homesteaded, and "up there over the ridge" he was trying to build a home. His father had come out to live with him, but ill health had overtaken him, and he died. This man had been his father's nurse and undertaker. He had laid his companion to rest among the rocks of that isolated homestead. "Yes, it gets lonely sometimes," he said, but a smile crossed his lips as he changed his narrative. "I had a strange thing happen to me the other day," he continued. "I came down for my mail and some one

had sent me a magazine. It had a sphinx head on the cover. I opened it and found it was a Sunday-school 'Quarterly.' Don't you know, it sort of got me for a few minutes. We fellows out here get careless and forget about Sunday—and I guess everything else that's good. I had not been reading my Bible. Well, it just brought back to my memory those dear old days in New York when I used to be a regular attendant at church and Sunday school. How did they know I was out here and lonely? How did they find out about me? I tell you I thought I was forgotten—but some one must have cared. It helped me to get back into a little different way of living." It was this very missionary to whom he was talking who had mailed the "Quarterly" to him. The silent but none the less forceful message of the printed page has been the means of leading many a soul nearer to its God, bringing peace and comfort in times of distress and grief, and restoring those who have grown cold and indifferent in their service of Christ.

The Sunday-school missionary finds many opportunities in his visitations for personal work with the unsaved. He seizes every opportunity to impress upon hearts that never have been touched by the call of the Saviour, the gracious invitation to accept the salvation which is so freely offered to all who will believe. Many hopeful conversions have resulted. One of these missionaries whose field of labor is among the hill dwellers of West Virginia reported twenty-five such conversions

within a single month. In every home he read carefully selected passages, offered prayer and conversed with the people with reference to their personal salvation. "I went into a home with sand on the floor instead of carpet," he writes, "where thirty-seven children and grandchildren were gathered. In one home I baptized the entire family, receiving the father and mother into the church. The condition of another family was distressing in the extreme. All the furniture that I could see was two beds and two chairs. The mother was pale with consumption, a child of three stood clinging to her lap and a girl of nine stood at the window, bearing all the evidences of having contracted the same dread disease. In another home we found the mother propped up in her chair, her children gathered about her, her neighbors giving her things to eat, with not one cent for medicine. We helped them as far as we were able. So we visited, so we worked. I wish you could have heard some of the prayers the converts made, as they pleaded with God for forgiveness for the past and light for the future. They came from hearts that had been touched by the Spirit of God."

Another experience from the diary of a Sunday-school missionary who labors on the western prairie among newcomers shows how helpfully his energies are expended in behalf of those who would be utterly neglected without his pastoral care: "Some kind friends who are very much interested in the missionary work in North Dakota presented us with

a good, young horse and a new buggy, which have proven a great blessing to us, helping us to reach many people without the expense of livery rigs—people who are so isolated that they never see a minister or hear a gospel song. We believe this gift is a direct answer to prayer. We drove sixteen miles one afternoon to visit one of the homes, where we found the mother and four bright little girls. The baby organ was a wonder to them. We sang gospel songs, read the fourteenth chapter of John and prayed with them, and before we left we taught the little girls the song, 'All the Way to Calvary.' We gave each child a Testament. As we started away the mother cried and said, 'We will never forget your visit; won't you come again,' Since then we have been sending them our little missionary magazine, which I am sure they enjoy very much. The next day we drove ten miles in the opposite direction, to visit another neglected family living in a sod house. We spent the night with them. In the evening after the men had come in from their work, we sang and read the Scripture, and all kneeled and asked our heavenly Father's protection and care."

We should remember that the people thus reached are by no means inferior. Many of them can look back upon days when the Church and its services held a large place in their lives. Their present condition is simply due to lack of opportunity, and with no restraining influences it becomes a very easy matter to yield to the temptation to put away

the teachings and practices of earlier years. It is because of the lack of any standard. The coming of the Sunday-school missionary and the introduction of the Sunday school establishes the gospel ideal. Under the influence of the study of the Word the backslider frequently is reclaimed. A Montana missionary gives us an illustration of this in writing about a visit to a remote district into which a number of new families had moved, where he was making a canvass with the hope of planting a little Sunday school. Calling on a Sunday morning at the home of a middle-aged couple who had recently come from an eastern state, he found the wife quite willing to help in maintaining a Sunday school. "We have always been religious people," she said, but the missionary noticed that she seemed rather uneasy. Upon inquiring for her husband he learned that he was out at work on the farm.

"My husband is working to-day for the first time on the Sabbath," she began to explain, "but he doesn't like it a bit. He is up the gulch there, around that point. I wish you would go and see him." When the missionary went out and introduced himself a few minutes later, the man literally wilted, and sat down on a rock, his face covered with shame. Finally, he looked up and said, "Brother, I am ashamed of myself; I hate this Sunday work." Then he looked down and said thoughtfully: "What is a fellow going to do when he can't get a job unless he works on Sunday? I'll give you fifty dollars if you will tell me where I can get a

job at carpentering without being compelled to work on Sunday. Well, no, I can't afford that much, either, but I would like to get work somehow. I have been unhappy all the morning, just miserable; this is the first time I ever worked on Sunday; I think it will be the last, too."

He could not attend the service that was held that afternoon, but his wife was present, and she was elected superintendent of the Sunday school. The next week the husband wrote to the missionary; "I worked only the Sunday you saw me; however, I had to quit the work I had, as they kept no one except those who can work on Sundays. Yet I am proud to say that the loss is gained in another way, for I have the proud honor of being teacher in the senior class of the school."

Another frontier missionary was stopping over night at a ranch house where he met "Rattlesnake Joe," who has figured quite prominently as the hero in recent novels dealing with western life. When the missionary first met him he was leading a dance at the ranch house. The next morning the missionary engaged him in conversation and gradually turned his thoughts toward spiritual matters. At Joe's request the missionary wrote the Lord's Prayer on a slip of paper and handed it to him. Joe read it carefully two or three times, then turning to the missionary, said, "That's pretty fine language, must have been written by an eastern dude." (All eastern tourists are designated by the ranchmen in this country as dudes.) "Yes," the mission-

ary replied, "it was written in the far east. It is the prayer of our Blessed Lord. Come to the school on the Sabbath Day, I have something that I want to tell you about, the One who gave us this prayer." Rattlesnake Joe was there, with many of the boys from the round-up.

Who can say what may be the result of this word spoken to one who had wandered far from God and from the teachings of his boyhood home? The direct results of such service as this are seldom seen, but the fruitage will appear in days to come and in ways that bring blessing to many.

One of the most interesting phases of this service is seen in connection with the lumber camps of the Northwest. As the missionary talks to the men gathered around the bunk-house stove after the day's toil is over, he finds earnest listeners and seekers after truth. The missionary's words bring back sacred and tender memories of saintly parents; and the Christian teachings of other days, from which they have long been separated. Many have been brought under deep conviction, confessing their sins and resolving with God's help to lead sober, Christian lives.

"In one of the large lumber camps I visited," writes a Sunday-school missionary, "it was my unusual privilege to persuade the 'boys' to give up the Saturday night dance, so that the late hours would not interfere with the Sunday service. I make bold to say that this indeed is a rare instance of self-abnegation, especially in the woods of Idaho, where

dancing is the 'rage' and the only recreation. And yet this sacrifice is easily accounted for in their desire to hear the gospel. It did one good to see these hardy men of the forest take their lanterns that night and trudge through the woods in slush and mud to tell the 'fiddlers' not to come to the hall, as there was going to be preachin' to-morrow. And a crowd was there on the morrow! All the benches of the mess house were taken to the hall. It was filled to overflowing, many looking in through the windows. It was indeed a red-letter day for the women and children of the camp, for a Sunday school was organized and the jacks, or the "bohunks," as they are called, bought and paid for the Sunday-school hymn books that night. Oh, how great is the need of the Sunday school in this camp and scores of others just like it! I wish that I could minister to such places more often.

"During my last visit at the camp, the 'boys' told me of a Massachusetts man only three days out who had gotten seriously hurt in the woods. 'You had better "talk" with him,' they said, 'as the doctors have given him up.' Going up to the young man's bunk house the next morning, I was glad to be apprised before entering that the doctors entertained hopes of his recovery. After greeting the young fellow I asked him, after a few moments' conversation, if he would not like to have me write to his folks in the East. 'No, no,' he said. 'Surely I'm not going to die.' 'No,' I said, 'I have been given every assurance before I came in that you

will recover, and yet don't you think you ought to tell your folks about your sickness?' 'No,' he replied, and in this I saw he was obdurate. 'Well,' I said, 'how would you like me to read the Bible and pray with you?' 'Well, I won't mind that at all,' he said. 'Just go to it.'"

What are the rewards of such service? Here are some extracts from letters received by one of the missionaries engaged in this work: "Dear Brother in Christ, I do not think that I have ever spent a week any happier than the one just passed. Of course some of the old temptations arise, but I have labored hard against them and it is getting easier all the while to down them. Have not seen Florence (another convert, a girl of eighteen who is laboring hard to live the Christ life alone in a family of fourteen) this week but have prayed that God would strengthen and keep her, for the poor girl has a hard row to hoe. Am longing for your return. I pray God to help me to be a help to you here and to fight the 'licker traffic.'" This came from a young man of twenty-five, living among stock men and sheep men. Pray for him. A mother of eleven children writes, "I feel as if I can sing for a month since you came here." From another, "Thank you so much for the gospel you brought us."

The faithful, heroic men who are engaged in this service, find joy in this wayside ministry to the outcast, the neglected, the destitute, because of the consciousness that somewhere the precious seed they

are sowing will spring forth into bountiful harvests. From the standpoint of statistics, such work is discouraging, at times and the man who is zealous for a record may become disheartened, but to the brave soul who is willing to endure the hardship and isolation, sharing the joys and sorrows of these marginal peoples, it is a service that brings a constant supply of spiritual refreshment and power.

SUNDAY SCHOOL EXTENSION

1. The first Children's Day in a town five years old where the Sunday school is the only religious influence.
2. A Sunday school fifty miles from a railroad, which meets in a claim shanty.
3. The entire community looks to this Sunday school to uphold the standard of Christian living.
4. One of our Sunday-school Chapels in Idaho. An entire valley taken for Christ through the work of rural Sunday schools.

CHAPTER IX

SUNDAY-SCHOOL EXTENSION

In the foregoing chapters the rural Sunday school has been referred to as the material from which many valuable by-products are obtained. In applying the efficiency test we have found that the success of the rural Sunday school is not measured by its possibilities of growth into a church organization, desirable as that may be. The experience of those who have been in closest touch with rural Sunday-school work proves that some of the best results, from a spiritual viewpoint, have been produced through the work of Sunday schools situated in places where church organizations would be impracticable. Neither do the instances recorded in these chapters necessarily apply to Sunday schools that have had a permanent existence. The aim has been to show the value of Bible study and teaching, even under conditions that would seem to many to be inimical to the attainment of results that would be of any real and permanent value. The crude surroundings, the meager equipment, the untrained leadership, the opposition of the forces of sin, the discouragement of small numbers, frequently make the possibilities of the rural Sunday school most unpromising, and yet, despite such hindrances, effective work has been done in developing the highest form of Christian character.

The subject resolves itself into a question of the relative value of formation and reformation in the task of evolving a citizenship that is actuated in all its processes by the Christian motive. While we spend our millions upon reclaiming the lost, shall we not exercise the same if not greater liberality in providing for the purifying of the stream at its source? Profiting by the endless task of reformation we are learning the value of prevention. We are realizing the importance of safeguarding the character of our boys and girls against the pitfalls and the dangers that await them. As Joseph Malins says:

'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;
But over its terrible edge there had slipped
A duke and full many a peasant;
So the people said something would have to be done,
But their projects did not at all tally.
Some said, "Put a fence round the edge of the cliff";
Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
For it spread through the neighboring city,
A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
But each heart became brimful of pity
For those who had slipped o'er that dangerous cliff;
And the dwellers in highway and alley
Gave pounds or gave pence, not to put up a fence,
But an ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked: "It's a marvel to me
That people give far more attention
To repairing results than to stopping the cause,
When they'd much better aim at prevention.
Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he;
"Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally:
If the cliff we will fence we might almost dispense
With the ambulance down in the valley."

The fact that twelve millions of children and young people in our land are without the opportunity of Christian instruction and training is one that should awaken us to renewed activity in sending forth workers who will win them to the study of the Word. It is true that many thousands of this number may be found in our cities, where the proportion of foreign population is large. Little has been done in the way of an organized, systematic and persistent effort to gather them into Sunday schools, despite the well-organized Christian forces that are at work in the metropolitan centers. Making liberal allowance for this element, we still have from nine to ten millions of boys and girls scattered throughout the United States, mainly in the rural districts, who have not been brought into Sunday schools. It is to win such that we must send forth our Sunday-school missionaries, penetrating the remotest parts, and laying the foundations for Christian life and service in small Sunday schools located within convenient distance.

One who is familiar with the situation in the South and Southwest, tells us that in seven states there are four million children and young people without Christian opportunities. Concerning one of the districts in this section of the country, a pastor gives us a more detailed description of the conditions. This is his statement:

"During the last thirteen months I have conducted meetings in ten needy fields. I mention this to show that I have gotten fairly close to the heart of the situation here. I want to declare that I positively have never seen anything that even approached the urgent need of work done by a Sunday-school missionary as it is here. This is an old country; some of it has been settled for a hundred years; nearly all of the people are natives. (I am speaking of the rural and isolated stretches.) The soil is quite good and will grow anything if worked. The climate is good. One still sees the farmer here plowing with his one mule, between the trees. Some farmers told me they did not handle more than twenty-five to fifty dollars the whole year. Every member of the family, in many instances, goes barefooted most of the year. In one community where I conducted some services I entered about twenty-five homes, and in only four did I find anything but homemade chairs; none of the houses had paint. The public schools are few and of little consequence. The day that my meeting began a Baptist brother closed one in the small schoolhouse. The good man actually could not read

the Scriptures in public, so illiterate was he. Yet, to use his words, 'They had been swimming in glory for a week.' The only light we had in the schoolhouse was one gasoline torch. There were always twice as many people present as the house would hold. Their religion runs to extreme emotionalism; still they listen with great earnestness to a man who, as they say, 'can learn them something.'"

Commenting upon these conditions of Sunday-school destitution, extending over eleven southern states, one of our field superintendents who has made a careful study of the situation writes:

"A part of these figures represents those having privileges not appreciated, though by far the larger part is that of absolute destitution, because of lack of Sunday-school organizations, representing those needy and neglected communities that are lacking in Bible instruction and the systematic opening of the Word on the Sabbath. Nearly all classes of people are represented in these needy districts—the mountain and hill people, the poor tenantry of the plantations, the lumber-mill families, the homesteaders and the mining population. . . . There is a district in middle Tennessee, comprising some ten counties, in which there are practically no Presbyterian churches, where nothing is being done by any denomination in planting Sunday schools among those destitute of gospel privileges."

The mountain districts in themselves present a most needy field for Sunday-school work. There are

more than a million boys and girls living in the mountains of the South who are ignorant of the Bible and its teachings. In eighteen mountain counties, covering 6,692 square miles, with a population of 250,000, there is but one Sunday school to each 1,200 inhabitants. The total Sunday-school enrollment is 14,000, less than six per cent of the population. In some counties there are but one or two educated ministers.

In many places the people are without any religious services. Many villages and communities are without a church of any denomination; no Sunday school, prayer meeting or other religious influences of any kind. Another great misfortune suffered by this section is the fact that the most promising young men who are called into the ministry are forced to go elsewhere for an education, and when they are equipped for their life work they almost invariably accept a call to some other field. Many of them to-day are occupying important pulpits in city churches. The result is that the cause of religion among the mountaineers suffers for the lack of men who are able to bring things to pass. This mountain country has been furnishing pastors and business men for the larger towns and cities, and receiving little in return. If the churches really understood the situation they would put more men and money into this field.

The mountaineers are very susceptible to gospel influences, and very emotional in their worship. A sermon, to be enjoyed by them, must appeal to their

emotional nature. The preacher who does not cry as he talks, occasionally at least, and the church member that does not shout during the "revival meeting" have little or no religion, in their estimation.

Most of these native preachers serve without compensation, some receive from fifty cents to a dollar a month. They do no pastoral work and, as they are obliged to labor during the week to sustain their families, they naturally are able to do very little in developing the various departments of religious activity which are usually associated with the church. At least fifty per cent of these primitive mountain congregations do not have Sunday schools. This is a district which promises an abundant harvest from the seed-sowing of the Sunday-school missionary.

Another inviting field confronts us among the southern negroes. Only one negro child out of every ten is enrolled in Sunday school. Thirteen negro Sunday-school missionaries are engaged in planting and sustaining Sunday schools in ten states. Two of these field workers give their attention largely to Sunday-school development work, assisting in the holding of institutes, conferences and schools of method in connection with the day schools under the care of the Freedmen's Board. In these day schools there are about sixteen thousand pupils, many of whom will go out as teachers of negro district schools in all parts of the South. Therefore the importance of training these young

people for intelligent and aggressive Sunday-school work may well be emphasized. It is our aim so to instruct them with reference to the best plans and methods of Sunday-school organization and work, that they will not only be zealous for the Sunday school wherever they may go to enter upon their life work, but capable, also, of conducting a Sunday school in an efficient manner.

Experience has taught us that the most effective way of reaching the negro boys and girls is through the Sunday school. If we help the negro we must begin with the boys and girls. They must be instructed in the fundamentals of Christianity; they must be taught the true meaning of religion, and its precepts must find an entrance into their hearts. They must be taught the value of character and their individual responsibility to God. How much better it is to save the negro boy and girl by such a course of teaching than to spend our money upon institutions for reforming them after they have grown to maturity!

The negro Sunday-school missionaries have about four hundred mission Sunday schools under their care, in which about twelve thousand negro pupils are enrolled. They are constantly adding to this number by organizing new Sunday schools in needy places. When we consider that this represents practically all the Christian training which these children receive, we can appreciate the value of such work and its effect upon the future of the negro race.

To relate the many interesting incidents connected with this work, showing how neighborhoods have been transformed, little Sunday schools becoming permanent centers of Christian influence and souls born into newness of life, would require many pages, but it would form a chapter of thrilling missionary information. One negro Sunday-school missionary in Georgia reports seven Presbyterian churches and a large day school as one outgrowth of Sunday schools organized during the past eight years.

But we have only scratched the surface thus far. Alabama and Mississippi each have but one negro Sunday-school missionary; Kentucky has a large negro population almost completely neglected religiously, to whom a Sunday-school missionary should be sent. Our force of negro workers should speedily be doubled.

The western states also are rich with opportunities for this kind of pioneer service. Great stretches of country far removed from the railroads are peopled here and there by families who have been attracted by the possibilities of extended agricultural development through irrigation enterprises; others are trying the dry farming "experiment" and many others are engaged in the mining and lumber industries. One Sunday-school missionary, located in the San Joaquin Valley of California, has been endeavoring to meet the need of that district, which is as large as the entire State of Indiana. He describes a situation which should fill the Church of

Christ with a burning zeal to furnish the means to support workers who could plant scores of Sunday schools. These schools would become centers of Christian influence for the youths who are living there and who are now without any one to provide for their spiritual needs.

"Along the southwestern part of the valley bordering the Coast ranges for over one hundred miles lie the greatest oil-producing fields in the world," the missionary writes. "They carry a migrating population of from twenty to thirty-five thousand people. This I consider the greatest and most neglected mission field in the West. The valley proper is about two hundred miles long and one hundred miles wide—level and fertile, the greatest irrigation region in America—the Eldorado of intensive farming. Hundreds of thousands of acres are being brought under irrigation every year. New towns by the score are being settled. It is estimated that about fifty thousand people came into this valley last year, to make homes for themselves, and the tide is rapidly rising. Recently the great Chowchilla Ranch of one hundred and eight thousand acres was thrown open to settlement by a big eastern syndicate. Special trains were run from Los Angeles, Fresno, Stockton and Sacramento, and over three thousand people were on the ground. A new town is laid out, streets graded, sidewalks laid and everything ready for business and business is already there. In five years it will be a little city.

"The whole floor of the valley is beginning to teem with new life. Cities and towns and new rural communities are springing up with magical swiftness. It is the land of specialized farming, where a few acres will sustain a family. It is increasing in population so rapidly that your missionary is utterly unable to keep track of the new communities, much less to organize them in religious work. This valley alone will easily sustain five million people and feed five million more when it is all brought under intensive cultivation. This two hundred and fifty miles of foothills and mountains have innumerable little hamlets untouched by the gospel. Children are growing to maturity here without ever seeing a minister or hearing a sermon.

"I have been traveling at the rate of fifteen hundred miles a month and have not yet gotten over all my field. So you see that the first Sunday schools that I organized will have children in the primary grade, who were born since I organized the Sunday school, before I can get around to visit the school again. Talk about 'circuit riding' in the pioneer days of the Middle West! Why, the Sunday-school missionary in southern California has them all beaten. I take the railroad as far as it goes, then the stage as far as it reaches, then the pack train as far as it goes, and finally I take to my heels for the rest of the journey. And there is much heel work both on the plains and in the mountains."

Five Sunday-school missionaries should be placed in this field to overtake the immediate, pressing need.

The Northwest also is experiencing extensive development and here, too, a force of efficient Sunday-school workers should be placed to provide for the needs of the newcomers. A Sunday-school missionary, who planted twenty-two Sunday schools in one year, in one part of his field in eastern Washington, writes:

"My work calls me into the remote and outlying districts sometimes ten, fifty, one hundred miles away from the railways and beaten paths. It calls me into communities where the preacher and his message have not been heard for years, where children stand in wonder at the preacher 'talking to his plate' (saying grace) before meals; where boys and girls in their teens have come to attend the Sunday school for the first time in their lives; where young men and women have lived in their cañons all their lives without ambition enough to discover what lies beyond their circumscribed horizon; where boys and girls are living absolutely destitute of all religious and moral training, and succumbing to immorality, vice and shame."

A recent survey of a similar district in Oregon revealed the fact that in a territory covering one whole country of ten thousand six hundred square miles and two-thirds of the adjoining county to the east, with an additional area of six thousand square miles and an approximate population of eight thou-

sand people, there is but one Protestant minister. He is supplying the only Presbyterian church in this district, and is located in a town of less than one thousand population. Only one other Protestant church, and that vacant, is situated in the same town. Aside from three rural points where small Sunday schools are being maintained with a small enrollment in each, no other form of religious work is carried on—the large majority are scattered over this vast interior region neglected by the churches. So far as the people themselves are concerned, the great majority of them are as well educated, as refined in their moral tastes, and just as deserving of spiritual attention as people anywhere else in this western country.

Montana, the third largest state in the Union, is sharing in the great developments that are taking place. One of the large railroad systems has surveyed the line of an extension, the construction of which has already begun. Twenty new town sites have been plotted, and it is predicted that within a brief period each will have a population of from three to five thousand persons. This branch road pierces a rich agricultural and stock-raising district where material prosperity will be the certain reward of the pioneer.

In the Rocky Mountain states also the new settler finds inviting opportunities. In a recent issue of a Denver daily newspaper the following announcement appeared:

HOMESEEKERS RUSH TO COLORADO FOR BIG LAND BARGAIN

Offering of 3,000,000 Acres of School Lands Under Easy Conditions Draws Attention of the Nation and State Register Hoggatt Is Swamped With Applications of Earnest Settlers—Great Influx Soon.

In one large county in Colorado, we are told that there is but one Protestant minister. There are twenty-eight school districts in this county, and in only five of them is any attempt being made to carry on any religious work.

With these glimpses of the vast field that lies before us, let us consider how we may provide for its most pressing need. These districts cannot support churches or pastors. Yet the Church is under obligation to help them by giving them that form of Christian influence which every community can sustain; namely, the Sunday school. It will be a misfortune, indeed, if the Church's vision of world-wide missions becomes so broad as to overlook these great needs at home, while providing liberally for needs afar off. It will be a great spiritual loss also if the Church's missionary outlook should become so contracted as to regard lightly the needs of the

rural population in our own land, too poor in many cases, and too widely scattered, to promise much in the direction of church organizations, but whose spiritual necessities are greater, on that account. It is incumbent upon us to establish within their reach such Christian agencies as are best adapted to their condition and circumstances; and this can most effectively be accomplished through the establishment of Sunday schools. The gratifying results of years of such service in behalf of similar neighborhoods elsewhere and a consideration of the by-products of these labors, should furnish convincing proof of the value of the little Sunday school as an indispensable factor in accomplishing the Church's mission to evangelize the homeland.

There is no danger of overchurching these districts, because practically nothing has been done to provide the means of grace for them. There may be no immediate prospect of organizing a church in many of these places and the attempt to do so would, in the majority of cases, result in defeat. For this reason these outlying districts are not reached by the home-mission pastor. The Sunday school, however, appeals to them because it requires no subscription to a denominational creed or form of government, but holds before them the advantages of regular Bible study for the children and adults as well. Thus it acts as a unifying force, bringing the people together for a common purpose.

All the denominations are realizing as never before the necessity of extending this phase of their

Sunday-school work, and they are making earnest appeals to their churches to support a larger force of missionaries.

More than a quarter of a century of experience upon the part of our Sunday-school Board in this pioneer work and the gratifying results that have accrued to the Presbyterian Church through these efforts have vindicated the wisdom of the policy that has been pursued.

Time, money and energy have been conserved, and the work has been established upon an efficient and permanent basis. The agent of an undenominational enterprise, however worthy its object may be, is always at a disadvantage. He lacks the backing of the organized forces of a denomination which is prepared to furnish equipment, aid in the development of the work, assist in providing a house of worship, give it pastoral care and make it a part of the great body of believers who form its communion. Denominational coöperation and support account largely for the success of Presbyterian Sunday-school missionary work. The Sunday-school missionary is being looked upon more and more as an indispensable field worker, if our Church is to continue to be an aggressive force for the extension of Christ's kingdom in America.

If we are going to do this work among the rural people it must be done through the Sunday school; it must be done by a representative of our own denomination who goes forth with presbyterial sanction and coöperation; it must be done with a true

missionary spirit, which has for its motive only obedience to the divine commission to give the gospel to all who need it. The returns may not be immediate, and discouragements may lie by the way, but we go forward in the strength of the promises of God, concerning his Word; and such faith is never disappointed. It is only as we go on faithfully sowing that we may expect harvests to be garnered for the King.

It should be emphasized also that this is a work which, although closely related to the other benevolent agencies of the Church, stands alone in its distinctive aim and purpose. Home mission boards were carrying on their splendid work for generations before our Church inaugurated Sunday-school missions, taking the gospel to thousands of persons in localities where churches could be organized, and helping to sustain pastors for them, but no attempt was made to provide for the religious welfare of the multitude of boys and girls who were living in remote parts. The placing of the ban upon religious instruction, and even upon Bible reading, in the public schools, together with the decline in family religion, made the problem of character development among our youth one to which the Church was forced to give serious attention. To meet this situation the Presbyterian Church reorganized its Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, making the work of caring for the religious nurture of America's youth its chief concern. From year to year this Board has developed

this work as a distinctive missionary enterprise, presenting to the Church the appeal of the needy children, of whom our Saviour said it was not the will of the Father that one should perish. It has not dealt with churches, but with the unchurched regions where Christian privileges are lacking. In recent years the work has broadened to include efforts looking toward the betterment of the Sunday schools already organized.

We are not reaching these schools by correspondence, but we are dealing with them at close range. In visiting Sunday schools our field workers do not leave without having a conference with the officers and teachers, leading them up, by degrees, to a higher standard. They show them how they may have a Cradle Roll, a Home Department an adult class and even a teacher-training class. Sometimes they teach a specimen lesson from the teacher-training textbook. Thus they inspire enthusiasm for these improvements, which, if presented in the form of a letter, would meet with indifference.

Everyone who has familiarized himself with the present situation with reference to the whole problem of religious education realizes that this Board of our church has a large and needy field of service before it, not only in providing religious instruction for the multitudes outside of Sunday schools, but also in studying how it may encourage the progressive development of these schools in ways that are within their reach and adapted to their limited opportunities.

It follows most naturally and logically that the Board which brings new Sunday schools into existence, and provides the Sunday-school literature, should be the agency to whom the Sunday schools should look for assistance in developing their work. The improvement of Sunday schools must go side by side with the work of organizing new Sunday schools. The work is one. It is missionary and it is educational. Viewed from every standpoint the entire field of work of this Board stands as a specific task, and it is of such proportion and importance that it may rightly be regarded as one of the chief agencies of the Church. It is a task that is sufficiently large to occupy the best thought and attention of this Board, which for so many years has aimed to serve the Church along the specific lines of work which the General Assembly has committed to its care, and in the successful prosecution of which the General Assembly has so frequently commended it.

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